CONDITIONS OF SALE

blocks of ice. In the corridor an electrician was kneeling on the floor, busied over some repair to the wires. Ever since they had had those powerful lights to illuminate the hotel frontage there had always been something going wrong with the overworked installation of the hotel. The porter pulled himself together and went back to his post. Little Georgi meanwhile had taken charge. Georgi was the son of the proprietor of a large hotel business who wanted to see his son work his way up from the ranks. Senf, feeling somewhat oppressed, made his way straight across the Lounge, where there was now a throng of movement. Here the jazz band from the tea room encountered the violins from the Winter Garden, while mingled with them came the thin murmur of the illuminated fountain as it fell into its imitation Venetian basin, the ring of glasses on tables, the creaking of wicker chairs and, lastly, a soft rustle of the furs and silks in which women were moving to and fro. A co March air came in gusts through the revolving doors whenever the pageboy passed guests in or out.

"*All right,*" said little Georgi in English as Senf finally dropped anchor at the porter's desk. "Here's the seven o'clock post. 68 has been making a row because her chauffeur wasn't there on the tick. Rather a hysterical lady, eh?"

"68—that's Grusinskaya," said the Hall Porter, and began to sort the letters with his right hand. "That's the dancer. We know her—for eighteen years past. She gets a fit of nerves every night before she goes on the stage, and then she makes a row."

A tall gentleman in the Lounge got up stiffly out of an easy chair and came with bent head towards the porter's desk. He loitered for a bit round the Lounge before approaching the entrance hall. The impression he made was emphatically one of listlessness and boredom as he glanced at the magazines displayed on the little bookstall and lit a cigarette. Finally, however, he fetched up beside the porter and asked casually, "Any letters for me?"

The porter knew his cue in this little comedy. He looked in pigeonhole No 218 before he replied: "Not this time, Herr Doktor." Whereupon the tall gentleman slowly set himself in

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"Who's waiting?" asked Rohna, the head reception clerk, from the bureau near by, sticking up his bright red head over the low glass partition. But the porter did not reply. He thought he had just heard his wife cry out and he strained his ears. Then he had to dismiss his private cares again, and help little Georgi unravel some complicated train connections in Spanish for the Mexican gentleman in Room No 117. Pageboy No 24, with red cheeks and well-plastered hair, shot across from the lift and called out excitedly—too loud for the dignity of the Lounge—"Baron Gaigern's chauffeur!" Rohna raised an admonitory and repressive hand like a conductor. The porter passed on the order for the chauffeur by telephone. Georgi opened eyes of boyish expectation. There was a smell of lavender and expensive cigarettes, immediately followed by a man whose appearance was so striking that many heads were turned to look at him. He was unusually tall and extremely well dressed and his step was as elastic as a cat's or a tennis champion's. He wore a dark blue trenchcoat over his dinner-jacket and this was scarcely correct perhaps, but it gave an attractively negligent air to his appearance. He patted Pageboy No 24 on his sleek head, stretched out his arm, without looking, over the porter's table for a handful of letters which he put straight into his pocket, taking out at the same time a pair of buckskin gloves. With a friendly nod to the head reception clerk he put on his dark felt hat, took out his cigarette case and put a cigarette between his lips. The next moment he removed his hat and stood aside to allow two ladies to pass before him through the revolving door. It was Grusinskaya, a small slim figure in a fur coat followed by a vague and self-effacing being with two cases in her hands. When the commissionaire at the entrance had stowed these two in their car the engaging gentleman in the blue raincoat lit his cigarette, put his hand in his pocket for a coin to give Pageboy No 11 who was working the revolving door, and disappeared through its whirligig of reflected lights with the blissful air of a young fellow going out on the spree.

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"Cigarettes, newspapers," Otternschlag said dully. The pageboy darted across to the cataleptic lady at the bookstall (Rohna looked with disfavour at this lively exhibition of youthful exuberance), and then Otternschlag took the papers and cigarettes that the pageboy had selected for him. When he paid he put the money on the plate, not into the boy's hand. He always set a distance between himself and others, though he was not aware of it. The half of his mouth that was still intact even smiled after a fashion as he unfolded the papers and began to read. He expected something of them that never came, just as no letter, telegram or caller ever came; he was dismally alone, empty, cut off from life. Sometimes when he was alone he confided this fact to himself aloud. It's a ghastly business, he often muttered, gazing on the stretches of raspberry-red carpet and shuddering at himself. It's ghastly. This is no life. No life at all. But where is there any life? Nothing happens. Nothing goes on. Boring. Old. Dead. Ghastly. Every

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"Will you please inquire over there; but I don't think there a room free," said the porter and pointed towards Rohna. The gentleman has been waiting two days for a room here," ıe said in explanation over the glass partition. Rohna, who had aken in the whole situation without a glance, made a polite and fleeting pretence of looking through the pages of his register, and then said: "Unfortunately we are full for the moment. Extremely sorry——"

"Still full? I see. Well, where am I to find a room, then?"

"You might look round near the Friedrichstrasse Station. There are a number of hotels there. . . ."

"No, no, thanks." He took a pocket handkerchief and wiped the moisture from his brow. "I went to one of those on arriving. That's not what I want. I want a really first-class hotel.' He took a damp umbrella from under his left arm and at thi the bulky parcel slipped from the grasp of his right and dis closed a few dry and crumbling pieces of bread and butte Count Rohna suppressed a smile. Georgi turned away ar gazed at the keys hanging from the board. Pageboy No gathered up the parched fragments with irreproachable coı posure, and with trembling fingers the man stuffed them iı his pocket. He took off his hat and put it down in front Rohna on the office counter. His forehead was high wrinkled and his temples pinched and blue. For a momen

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What's that? Reserved in advance you say? Well, so did I. This is the third time I have been here. The third time, if you please, I have lugged this heavy bag along here. It's raining. Every bus overcrowded. I am not in good health, I may tell you. And how many more times am I to make this journey? What's that? That's no way to talk. Is this the best hotel in Berlin? Yes? Well, then I want to stop in the best hotel in Berlin. Is it forbidden?" he looked from one to another. "I'm tired," he added. "I am tired out." His fatigue was obvious, and so was his ridiculous effort to express himself in correct style.

Suddenly Doctor Otternschlag intervened in the discussion. He had been standing nearby all this while, with the key of his room in his hand, resting his sharp elbows on the edge of the porter's desk.

"The gentleman can have my room if it's a matter of such importance," said Otternschlag. "It is utterly indifferent to me where I stay. Send his things up. I can move out. My boxes are packed. They're always packed. Do as I say, please. You can see the man's deadbeat and ill," he added, to forestall an objection which Count Rohna was about to bring forward with the eloquently gesticulating hands of a conductor.

"But, Herr Doktor," said Rohna quickly, "there can be no question of your giving up your room. Let me have another look. Let me see—— If the gentleman will be so good as to enter his name. Thank you—No 216, then," he said to the Hall Porter.

The Hall Porter gave Pageboy No 11 the key of No 216. The newcomer took the pen which was handed to him and in a curiously flowing handwriting wrote his name in the visitors' book.

"Otto Kringelein, Book-keeper. Fredersdorf, Saxony, born at Fredersdorf, 14-7-1882."

"There we are then," he said with a sigh of relief as he turned and blinked with wide-open eyes into the Lounge.

So there he stood in the Lounge of the Grand Hotel—Otto Kringelein, book-keeper, born at Fredersdorf and residing in Fredersdorf. He stood there in his old overcoat, and the glasses

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The room was long and narrow. It had one window. It smelt of stale cigar smoke and damp cupboards. The carpet was thin and worn. The furniture—Kringelein ran his fingers over it—was just polished nut-wood. There was furniture like that in Fredersdorf. A portrait of Bismarck hung over the bed. He had nothing against Bismarck, but he too was on the walls at home. He had expected other pictures over the beds in the Grand Hotel—gay, luxurious, something out of the common, something cheerful. He went to the window and looked out. There was a blaze of light below, for the glass roof of the Winter Garden spanned the court. Opposite a blank wall shut off the sky. A lukewarm and distressing smell of cooking steamed up. Kringelein felt a sudden nausea and supported himself on both hands over the washstand. The fact is, I'm not quite well, he thought sadly.

He sat down again on the faded bed cover and his sense of oppression increased with every moment. I shall not stay here, he thought. No, I shall not stay here in any case. This is not what I came for. It would not be worth while doing all I've done for this. This is no way to begin. I should be wasting my time in a room like this. They are deceiving me. They have plenty of better rooms than this in their hotel. Preysing does not have a room like this. Preysing would not stand it. He would make a row and they'd soon sit up. Fancy giving Preysing a room like this. No, I shall not stay here. Kringelein broke off his reflections and collected himself. He waited a few minutes. Then he rang for the chambermaid and made a row.

When it is considered that this was the first time in his life he had ever made a row, it must be admitted that he did not do so badly. The white-aproned chambermaid, in alarm, brought on to the scene a superior with no apron. The floor valet stood by in the offing and a bedroom waiter, balancing a tray of cold food on the palm of his hand, listened at the door. Rohna was consulted by telephone and requested Herr Kringelein's presence in the office. A director, one of the four directors, had to be summoned. Kringelein, obstinate now he had run amok, insisted that he required a superior and beautiful and expensive room, at the very least a room like Preysing's

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He sat down again on the faded bed cover and his sense of oppression increased with every moment. I shall not stay here, he thought. No, I shall not stay here in any case. This is not what I came for. It would not be worth while doing all I've done for this. This is no way to begin. I should be wasting my time in a room like this. They are deceiving me. They have plenty of better rooms than this in their hotel. Preysing does not have a room like this. Preysing would not stand it. He would make a row and they'd soon sit up. Fancy giving Preysing a room like this. No, I shall not stay here. Kringelein broke off his reflections and collected himself. He waited a few minutes. Then he rang for the chambermaid and made a row.

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At about ten o'clock in the evening Kringelein was strolling ound the Lounge, resplendent in a black coat, tall stiff collar nd a readymade black tie. He was not at all tired now. On the ontrary he was possessed by a feverish excitement and impatience. Now it's beginning, he kept thinking to himself, while his slender shoulders twitched like those of a restless dog. He bought a flower and stuck it in his buttonhole, slid his feet blissfully over the raspberry-coloured carpet and complained to the porter that there was *no ink in his room*. A pageboy conducted him to the writing-room. Kringelein was no sooner confronted by the rows of vacant writing-tables, discreetly lighted by green-shaded electric lamps, than his confident bearing deserted him. He took his hands from his trouser pockets and looked rather forlorn. From force of habit he pushed his white cuffs up into the sleeves of his coat before he sat down and began to write in the flowing copper-plate handwriting of a clerk.

To the Management of the Saxonia Cotton Company, Fredersdorf.

Sirs, The undersigned begs leave to say that in conformity with the enclosed medical certificate (enclosure A) he is unfit for duty for the ensuing four weeks. The undersigned requests that his salary for March due on the last of the month may in conformity with his written authority (enclosure B) be paid to Frau Anna Kringelein, 4 Station Road. Should it be impossible for the undersigned to return to duty at the end of four weeks, a further communication will follow. Your obedient and respectful servant,

Otto Kringelein.

To Frau Anna Kringelein, 4 Station Road, Fredersdorf, Saxony [Kringelein wrote next, and he wrote the A with a large and rounded flourish].

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made in the summer before my operation remains in force though the conditions have now altered. I have, for example, had all my savings transferred here from the bank, also I have borrowed a considerable sum on my life policy, also I have brought the legacy from my father of 3500 marks with me in cash. In this way I can live for a few weeks as a rich man and such is my intention. Why should only the Preysings get anything out of life while fools like us do nothing but pinch and save? In all I have taken 8540 marks. Anna can have what is left over, and in my opinion I don't owe her any more. She has given me a wretched life of it with that tongue of hers and no child either. I will keep you apprised of how I go on, but I must request your professional secrecy. Berlin is a fine town and greatly increased in size, when one has not been here for years. I think of a trip to Paris, too, as I know French pretty well from business correspondence. As you see I am keeping the flag flying and feel better than for a long time past.

Hearty greetings from your moribundus

Otto Kringelein.

PS—Tell our friends at the Musical Society that I have gone to a sanatorium.

Kringelein read the letters through. He had composed them the course of two sleepless nights. He was not quite satisfied. It seemed to him that something essential was left unsaid in the one to the solicitor, but he could not find out where the omission lay. Kringelein, though he was of a diffident and modest nature, was not actually stupid. He had idealism and aspirations. For example, he called himself 'moribundus' as a joke and this expression was one he had encountered in a book from the lending library, which he had read with some trouble and often discussed with the solicitor. Kringelein had lived from childhood the ordinary life of a small provincial town, the rather dreary, uninspired and pointless life of a petty clerk. Early in life and without any strong impulse he had married Fräulein Anna Sauerkatz, the daughter of Sauerkatz, the grocer. During the time between their engagement and marriage she seemed to him attractive, but soon after the marriage he found her hateful. She was disagreeable and parsimonious

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"You travel a great deal, sir, no doubt?" Kringelein asked shyly. He was ready to attribute immense wealth or high birth to every visitor in the hotel. He made a bow of the utmost Fredersdorfian elegance as he went on to say timidly: "Allow me to introduce myself—Kringelein. You have seen a lot of the world, sir."

Otternschlag turned aside the 'souvenir from Flanders'. "Oh, pretty well," he said. "Been everywhere everyone else goes—India and a few places besides." He smiled faintly at the inordinate hunger for such experiences that shone in the blue glint behind Kringelein's glasses.

"It is my intention to travel too," said Kringelein. "The head of our firm, Preysing, for example, goes abroad every year. A short time ago he was at St Moritz. Last Easter he took his whole family to Capri. That sort of thing must be wonderful."

"Have you any family?" asked Doctor Otternschlag, laying aside his paper. Kringelein took five seconds to consider the matter and then replied:

"No."

"No," returned Otternschlag, and in his mouth the word had something irrevocable about it.

"First I should like to go to Paris," said Kringelein. "Paris must be a beautiful city?"

Doctor Otternschlag, who up to now had shown a glimmer of warmth and interest, seemed to be falling asleep. He frequently had such moments of enervation in the course of the day, and the only resource he had against them was of a secret and vicious kind. "You must go to Paris in May," he murmured.

"I shan't have time for that," Kringelein said quickly.

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Gaigern, whose boredom had been immeasurable, clapped :ebly three times merely from good nature and left the stalls or one of the crowded exits. In the front rows and in the gallery a few stalwarts shouted and clapped. Farther back there was a general stampede for the cloakrooms. To Grusinskaya on the stage it looked like a rout, a panic. All the white shirt fronts and dress-coated backs and theatre cloaks streamed on in one direction. She smiled. She threw up her head on her long thin neck. She made a skip to the right, then to the left. She flung out her arms in greeting to the public that was now in full retreat. The curtain came down, rose again. The ballet stood its ground rigidly posed and disciplined. "Curtain! Curtain up!" shouted Pimenov the ballet-master hysterically He took charge of the curtain. Slowly it went up while th man at the crank worked like mad. One or two people in th stalls, who were just leaving, stopped and turned round, smil ing vacantly and clapping. There was some applause too fro a box. Grusinskaya pointed to the girls in gauze, who we grouped around her. Modestly she diverted the meagre a plause from herself to these unimportant young creatures. A now a few more came back with their coats and cloaks on a

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"Curtain! Curtain!" shouted Pimenov at the top of his voice. Grusinskaya danced hysterically on to the stage and off again. "Michael! Where is Michael? Michael must come on too," she cried laughing. Blue paint, perspiration and tears were mingled round her eyes. Witte pushed the dancer Michael on from the wings. Without looking Grusinskaya took his hand. It was so moist and slippery that she could scarcely grasp it. Then, standing just in front of the prompter's box, they made their bows with the beautiful harmonious grace of bodies trained to match each other. No sooner had the curtain fallen than Grusinskaya gave vent to her excitement by making a scene. "You bungled everything. It was all your fault. You went to pieces in the third arabesque! Such a thing would never have happened to me with Pimenov."

"For mercy's sake—I? But, Gru!" Michael whispered despairingly in his comical Baltic speech. Witte quickly drew him away behind the third wing and put his aged hand on his lips. "For God's sake, don't answer her back. Leave her alone," [illegible] whispered. Grusinskaya took the curtain alone. In [illegible] while the curtain was down, her rage broke out. She [illegible] them all unmercifully. She called them swine, hounds, [illegible] slackers, one and all. She accused Michael of drunkenness [illegible] Pimenov of worse. She threatened the departed ballet [illegible] dismissal and accused Witte, the conductor, who was still there, sad and silent, of driving her to suicide by his murder of the *tempo*. All the while her heart fluttered in her breast like a lost and weary bird and tears streamed down over her waxen painted smile. At last the man in charge of the lighting made an end by turning off the light. The theatre was in darkness and an impatient attendant spread grey cloths over the rows of seats. The curtain remained down and the man who worked the crank went home.

"How many 'curtains', Suzette?" Grusinskaya asked the elderly woman who threw a worn old-fashioned woollen cloak over her shoulders before opening the iron door that led off the

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Perhaps the world would have loved her as she really was as she looked now, for example, sitting in her dressing-room—a poor, delicate, tired old woman with worn-out eyes, and a small care-worn human face. When Grusinskaya did not have a success—and this sometimes happened nowadays—she shrank into herself and became very aged in an instant, seventy years old, a hundred years old, older even than that. Suzette in the background muttered her complaints in French as she stood over the grimy washhand basin and the hot water would not flow properly. Finally, however, she succeeded in producing the steaming compresses and Grusinskaya resigned her face to the tingling heat, while Suzette loosed her pearls from her neck, those world-famed almost fabulously beautiful pearls that came from the days of her Grand Duke.

"You can put the pearls away. I shall not wear them any more today," said Grusinskaya, catching sight of their rosy shimmer from beneath her half-closed eyelids.

"Not the pearls? But Madame ought to look her best for the banquet."

"No. There, that's enough. Make the best of me without the pearls, Suzette," Grusinskaya said, and gave herself up with a resigned air to the fingertips and the compresses and the rouge of her self-effacing factotum. She had to go to a supper given in her honour by the Stage Society and for this she must be painted in as deadly earnest as an Aztec warrior before he went to meet his enemies.

Witte walked to and fro in the passage outside the dressing-room as patiently as a sentry. He tapped the case of his watch which he wore in old-fashioned style in the pocket of his white

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Now, at any rate, she looked dazzling. She was beautiful, distinguished, flower-like, resilient. "Elisaveta looks . . . enchanting," said Witte, with a bow from a past century. He had accustomed himself to the use of studied expressions, firstly in order to conceal his love for Gru, to whom he had been devoted since his youth, and secondly, from the necessity of translating his speeches now into Russian, now into French. Grusinskaya herself slipped continually from one language into another, from the Russian 'thou' into the French and English 'you'. She could speak German too. She was as fluen in the one as the other, however abusive or however amiabl it was necessary to be. It was not always easy to follow he For example, she was no sooner in her motor car than sl asked: "Do you think, Witte, it was the fault of the pearls

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"Certainly I mean the pearls. They bring me bad luck, t pearls," she said with childish insistence. Witte folded one fashioned glacé kid glove in the other. "But, my dear." He disconcerted.

"What!" exclaimed Pimenov. "Why, the pearls brought you luck all your life. They were your mascot, talisman. And are you going to say now that they brin luck? What an idea, Gru!"

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Grusinskaya began to smile and to beam like a light suddenly turned on, and thus beaming and smiling she entered the club where thirty gentlemen in evening dress stood awaiting her entry.

Baron Gaigern was the very last to stop clapping; but, as soon as he was sure that the curtain would not go up any more, he left the theatre with the set face of a man in a hurry. The rain had stopped. White and yellow lights were reflected in the wet surface of the Kantstrasse; policemen were regulating the traffic; the destitute were eagerly opening the doors of motor cars for those in fur coats to step in. Gaigern threaded the crowd, disregarding traffic regulations at the risk of his life, and hurried into the comparative obscurity of the Fasanenstrasse, where his car—an unobtrusive four-seater—was parked. The chauffeur was smoking a cigarette.

"Well?" asked Gaigern with his hands in the pockets of his blue coat.

"She's changed her chauffeur again," said the chauffeur. "It's an Englishman this time. She picked him up at Nice. His employer went bankrupt and left him stranded there. I've had a meal with him, but I can't get anything out of him."

"I've told you a hundred times not to smoke when I'm speaking to you," Gaigern said.

"Right," said the chauffeur and threw away his cigarette. "He's driven round to the theatre now to take her to the Stage Society. He doesn't know yet when he has to take her back."

"He doesn't know?" Gaigern replied and struck the palm of his hand reflectively with his gloves. "Right. Then I'll go across there again. Bring the car round to the theatre and wait there."

Gaigern returned to the front of the theatre with the same set expression of a man intent on business. He found it dreary and deserted. The electric signs were dark and the placards looked as if they had nothing further to say. The stage door did not open on to the street, but into a courtyard where blank walls gleamed with wet ivy. Gaigern wedged himself among the little crowd of loungers who were waiting for Grusinskaya

Grusinskaya began to smile and to beam like a light suddenly turned on, and thus beaming and smiling she entered the club where thirty gentlemen in evening dress stood awaiting her entry.

Baron Gaigern was the very last to stop clapping; but, as soon as he was sure that the curtain would not go up any more, he left the theatre with the set face of a man in a hurry. The rain had stopped. White and yellow lights were reflected in the wet surface of the Kantstrasse; policemen were regulating the traffic; the destitute were eagerly opening the doors of motor cars for those in fur coats to step in. Gaigern threaded the crowd, disregarding traffic regulations at the risk of his life, and hurried into the comparative obscurity of the Fasanenstrasse, where his car—an unobtrusive four-seater—was parked. The chauffeur was smoking a cigarette.

"Well?" asked Gaigern with his hands in the pockets of his blue coat.

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hands were laden. In the left she carried a fair-sized flat suitcase, and in the right a small one of black patent leather. Thus encumbered she made her way slowly as far as the iron gateway that parted the theatre yard from the street, and there she strolled to and fro in the full light of the arc lamps. Wild thoughts sprang to the surface of Gaigern's mind during these seconds. He stood in his shadowed corner on the tiptoe of suspense, as though making ready for a jump or to start forward at the pistol shot. But he attempted nothing, for at that moment that damned fellow Berkeley drew up at the curb on a masterly turn. Suzette got into the grey car just as it struck half past twelve from the Gedächtniskirche, and Gaigern, who for the space of a minute had forgotten to breathe, took in a deep breath. He whistled. His little four-seater came up. "Straight after them to the hotel." He jumped up beside the chauffeur.

"Well, any hopes today?" asked the chauffeur. Again he had a cigarette between his lips as he spoke.

"Wait," Gaigern replied.

"Another whole night to stand by with the car, eh? All the same to you if I ever get another night's sleep or not, I suppose?"

Gaigern pointed his finger at the grey car, which was taking the little bend round the traffic sign at the Hitzigbrücke Bridge. "Overtake it," was all he said. The chauffeur accelerated. There was no policeman now on point duty at the bridge. The night life of Berlin thronged the streets beneath a red vault, where not a star showed in the cloudless spring sky.

"It's enough to feed one up," the chauffeur went on. "The game's not worth the candle. The end will be that we'll go bust."

"If you don't like it, you know what to do," the Baron answered amiably, and his upper lip curled. "If you're not pleased you can take your pay and go."

"I mean no harm," said the chauffeur.

"Nor I," said the Baron.

There was silence till they reached the hotel.

"Park at Entrance No VI," said Gaigern as he jumped out.

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"Park at Entrance No VI," said Gaigern as he jumped out.

"Ah! Then may I give you my spray and ask you to leave it in Madame's room?"

"We have had a lot of flowers today. The French Ambassador sent a whole basketful," said Suzette, who was still smarting from the evening's doubtful success. She looked at the bashful young man with considerable friendliness. But she could not take the spray because she had both her hands full. It was difficult even to get the key into her right hand in order to open the door of Room No 68. Gaigern, who saw her embarrassment, went quickly up to her. "Allow me," he said and put out his hands to take the two cases. Suzette surrendered the larger one, but she drew back instinctively as she maintained her grasp of the smaller one. So the famous pearls are in that one, Gaigern thought, though he kept his thoughts to himself. He opened the door for her and the inner one as well, and with shy and at the same time enraptured steps crossed the threshold of the room where Grusinskaya slept.

The room had the same banal and tawdry elegance as all the others. The cool air inside smelt of a curious aromatic scent as well as of the bouquets of flowers, and the window on to the small balcony stood open. The bed was turned down, and a pair of little bedroom slippers were by the bed. They were rather trodden down and shabby—the slippers of a woman who is accustomed to sleep by herself. Gaigern, as he stood by the door, felt a fleeting tenderness of pity at the sight of these little tokens of resignation on the part of a famous and beautiful woman. He stood in the door holding out his orchids as though beseeching the acceptance of them. Suzette put down the smaller suitcase on the dressing-table between the three mirrors and at last took the flowers.

"Thank you, Monsieur," she said, "what name shall I say?"

"What an idea! I am not so presumptuous," said Gaigern. He looked observantly at Suzette's wrinkled face and saw a strange resemblance to the face of her mistress. "You are tired," he said, "and no doubt Madame will be late. Have you to wait up for Madame?"

"Oh, no, Madame is good. Madame says every night, 'You can go to bed, Suzette.' But Madame needs me all the same.

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talked scandal about their masters. (They are an irritable lot, these chauffeurs, because they are not allowed to drink.) In the Lounge, visitors up from the provinces sat in amazement and mild vexation over the Berlin men who wore their hats on the backs of their heads and waved their hands, and over the Berlin ladies with their painted faces. Rohna, spruce and refreshed by a *friction* of toilet vinegar, as he crossed the Lounge was thinking: It is true that our night-time *clientèle* is not of the first order. But—*que voulez-vous?* nowadays only a vulgar *clientèle* puts money in the till.

Just before one o'clock Herr Kringelein landed in the Bar. He was tired, and he sank down at a small table and surveyed the world about him with watery eyes. To tell the truth, this Kringelein was utterly tired out, but he had the obstinacy of children on their birthdays—he simply would not go to bed. Moreover he felt that he was asleep already, for everything entered his brain like a confused and feverish dream and the noise, the perpetual movement, the voices and the music, seemed at one moment quite close and at the next moment very far away and entirely unreal. The world hummed most strangely about his ears and everything combined to produce in him a mysterious state of intoxication. Once, when he was ten years old, Kringelein had played truant from school. In a panic at the thought of a dictation lesson, he had gone out into the warm morning mist along the road to Mickenau. Then he had left the road and lain down in the heat of the day and slept with his head on a cushion of clover. Later he had got into a grassy hollow by the river and feasted on the raspberries that grew there in immense profusion. All his life he had never forgotten the buzzing of the great gnats that had fastened on his bare legs and his red juice-stained fingers as he pressed in among thorns and nettles to gather handful after handful of raspberries. He felt again, here in the Bar of Berlin's most expensive hotel, the same intoxicated feeling, a sense of exuberant plenty as well as of anxiety and alarm, the faint threat haunting the wicked joy of wrongdoing, the excitement of an escapade. It all came back to him as he sat there between one and two in the morning. The stinging gnats were there,

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were not put there only for the Preysings, he thought to himself, and at the thought, as it recurred again and again, his heart beat. There is a sweet, a bitter, and triumphant sense of freedom in those for whom death is decreed. Kringelein could find no word for it; but, whenever it came over him, he was forced to catch his breath in a heavy sigh.

"Excuse me——" said Doctor Otternschlag, in the midst of these whirling thoughts, as he pushed his bony knees under Kringelein's table. "There is not another seat left in this cursed Bar. Rotten accommodation. Louisiana flip," he said to the waiter and laid his skeleton fingers on the table between himself and Kringelein, like ten cold, heavy metal bars.

"Delighted," Kringelein said in his politest manner. "I am delighted to meet you again. You were so very kind to me, sir—believe me, I don't forget it. No, indeed."

Otternschlag, who had never, over a stretch of untold dreary years, heard anyone describe him as kind, and who for ten years had scarcely spoken to a living soul, felt a slight scorn mixed with a certain gratification at this repeated expression of thanks on the part of the gentleman from Fredersdorf. "Well, here's the best," he said and tossed down his flip. Kringelein, who had ordered something at random that he now scarcely dared to drink, took a sip of the copper-coloured fluid in the shallow metal cup.

"The life here is a little confusing at first," he said timidly.

"Hm," replied Doctor Otternschlag. "At first, yes. Doesn't improve on acquaintance either, when you live here as I do. No. Bring me another Louisiana flip."

"It is not at all as one imagined it," Kringelein said. His strong cocktail was making him reflective. "Nowadays, even in the provinces one is not out of the world. There are the newspapers. There are the cinemas. There are the pictures in the illustrated papers. But even so the real thing looks quite different. I knew for example that bar stools were high. But they are not so very high, I see. And the nigger behind the Bar is the mixer, of course. But there's nothing very wonderful about him at close quarters. As a matter of fact it's the first time I ever saw a nigger in my life. But he doesn't seem at all

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whole rotten business as an army doctor till the finish. Shell in the face. Diphtheria germs messing about in the wound till 1920. Two years isolation hospital. There, that's enough. Full stop. Been everything pretty well. Who cares?"

Kringelein gazed in horror at this ruin of a man whose fingers lay cold and lifeless on the table between them. The Bar provided a running accompaniment of assorted sounds and a Charleston could just be heard from the yellow pavilion. Kringelein had caught extremely little of Otternschlag's telegraphic communications; nevertheless tears started to his eyes. His tears came with ignominious ease ever since his operation, which had not cured him.

"And have you no one then, who—I mean—are you quite alone?" he asked in embarrassment, and Otternschlag noticed for the first time what a high-pitched, charming voice he had, a human, resonant, inquiring, diffident voice. He put out his cold fingers in front of him on the table, and withdrew them again immediately. Kringelein looked reflectively at the numerous white stitches and scars in Otternschlag's face and a sudden resolution unloosed his lips.

Alone, he knew what that meant—this was more or less what he said—he too was alone in Berlin, absolutely alone. He had cut the threads. He had severed various ties (such were the choice phrases he used) and now he was alone in Berlin. After spending all his life in Fredersdorf he felt stupid of course in a great city, but not so stupid that he could not see his own stupidity. He knew little of life, but now he wanted to get to know it. He wanted to know life as it really was. That was why he was here. "But," he went on, "where is real life? I have not come on it yet. I have been to a Casino, and here I am sitting in the most expensive hotel, but all the time I know it isn't the real thing. All the time, I have a suspicion that real, genuine actual life is going on somewhere else and is something quite different. When you don't belong to it it's not at all so easy to get into it, if you see what I mean?"

"Yes, but what's your notion of life?" replied Doctor Otternschlag. "Does life exist at all as you imagine it? The real thing is always going on somewhere else. When you're

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Otternschlag, who was on the point of dozing off, woke up again.

"Did you want me to do anything for you? Do you want me to introduce you to Life? You've made a fine choice I must say. I am always at your service, Herr Kringelein."

"I had no wish to be a nuisance to you, sir," Kringelein said with a sad little air of humility. He went on thinking. The polished phrases he had prepared found no utterance. Since he had come to the Grand Hotel he felt that he was in a foreign land. He spoke his native tongue like a foreign language that he had learnt from books and newspapers. "You were so extremely kind," he said. "I was hoping—but, of course, for you everything has another aspect than it has for me. You have it all behind you. You have had your fill. I have it all in front of me. That makes one impatient. Please forgive me."

Otternschlag looked so hard at Kringelein that even the stitched-up eyelid above his glass eye seemed to be focusing on him. He saw Kringelein clearly and completely. He saw his wasted figure in the workaday suit of stout grey worsted, rather shiny in places. He saw the sad and yearning expression round his bloodless lips and beneath that absurd moustache. He saw the wasted neck inside the wide, frayed collar, the clerk's hands and untended nails; he even saw the blacked boots, turned slightly in, on the thick carpet under the table. And finally he saw Kringelein's eyes, the blue human eyes behind the pince-nez, eyes in which was so much yearning expectation, wonder and curiosity. In them was hunger for life, and knowledge of death.

God knows whether some warmth from those eyes penetrated the frigid being of Doctor Otternschlag. Perhaps it was pure boredom that made him say: "True. Quite true. You're right. Right every time. I have it behind me. Yes, I have had my fill. It's all behind me now down to the last unimportant formality. And you say, then, that for you it is all in front. You've the appetite, eh? Of the soul, I mean. Now what's your

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God knows whether some warmth from those eyes penetrated the frigid being of Doctor Otternschlag. Perhaps it was pure boredom that made him say: "True. Quite true. You're right. Right every time. I have it behind me. Yes, I have had my fill. It's all behind me now down to the last unimportant formality. And you say, then, that for you it is all in front. You've the appetite, eh? Of the soul, I mean. Now what's your

ith a porter's cap. "Madame's key was taken upstairs by Mademoiselle," he said in French to a lady immediately after. Kringelein could almost understand it, thanks to his practice in foreign correspondence.

As the lady passed him there was a breath of delicate bitter-sweet scent from her golden evening cloak, open at the neck. Kringelein stared at her, for his manners were lost in boundless amazement. Her hair was black and smooth and she wore a diadem in it. Her drooping eyelids were painted blue-black. Her cheeks, temples and chin were ivory white and the veins were blue. Her mouth was carmine, almost purple, and it was rouged in such long curves that the corners seemed to stretch upwards to her nostrils in a fixed smile. Her hair was drawn down over her cheeks in two smooth black wings and where cheeks and hair met there was an ocre shadow laid on with extreme art. She looked tall, though she was scarcely of medium height, and this (as even Kringelein could tell) was due to the perfect proportions of her body and to the lightness of her carriage. She was accompanied by a little old gentleman with a top hat in his hand who looked like a musician. "Could you be at the theatre at half past eight, my dear?" the lady asked, just as she passed Kringelein. "I should like half an hour's work before the rehearsal."

Kringelein, who had never seen such a work of art as this lady, showed his amazement and delight in his face. He pulled Otternschlag by the sleeve and whispered in an undertone: "Who can that be?"

"Don't you know, my dear fellow? It's Grusinskaya," Otternschlag said impatiently and stalked over to the lift. Kringelein stood rooted to the spot. Grusinskaya! Good heavens! Grusinskaya, he thought. For Grusinskaya's fame was such that it had even reached Fredersdorf. So she really exists! That's what she looks like. She's not only to be read of in the newspapers. She's actually on earth. I've stood beside her, brushed against her, and the whole place is scented with her when she goes by. I must write to Kampmann about this.

He set off with speed in order to see her once more and to take a good look at her. At this very moment a little comedy of

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Then the doors closed throughout the hotel. Everyone locked himself in behind ([illegible] was left alone with himself and his secrets.

General Director Preysing, a large heavy man, rather too stout, arrived at the hotel at the impossible hour of 6.20 am, and the reason was that express trains do not stop at the unfortunate Fredersdorf. In spite of his utmost endeavours he had not so far succeeded in getting a fast train service for the town, though the factory had been granted a siding for loading its goods. This, however, only by the way. Preysing, then, arrived in a somewhat exhausted and shattered state, and he grumbled to himself when he found that the room engaged for him was one of the most expensive. First floor, with sitting-room and bath, No 71, price 75 marks. Preysing was a careful man. For example, the real reason why he did not come to Berlin in his car was that he wished to save the expense of putting up his chauffeur. However, as he had an expensive room with a bath to pay for, the first thing he did was to enjoy a long and luxurious immersion in hot water. (In this he closely resembled the other gentleman from Fredersdorf, Herr Kringelein.) After that he lay in bed for a while, but he could not shake off the fatigue and discomfort of a cold night journey. So he got up again and dressed. Then he unpacked his bag with meticulous care and hung his coats over the coat hangers that he had brought with him. Each shoe, each set of underclothing, everything, indeed, was enclosed in a clean linen bag, and on each bag the initials K P were neatly marked in red cross-stitch.

While he tied his tie, Preysing looked absentmindedly out on to the street. A morning mist obscured it. It was still early. Street sweepers were brushing the asphalt and yellow buses came like ships through the half light of morning. Preysing looked down, but he saw nothing of all this. He had a heavy day before him. He must collect himself and have everything well thought out. He rang for the valet and gave him his shoes to clean. He had even brought his own polish with him, a brown one and a white. The room was full already of the indefinable smell of a hurried business journey—trunk leather, Odol, eau-de-Cologne, turpentine, cigar smoke. Preysing took out his notecase with the deliberate and fastidious movements that were characteristic of him and counted his money. In the

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"Cognac for me. All well at home? Your wife and daughters? Quite well, I hope?"

"Thanks, quite well. Good of you to send congratulations on our silver wedding."

"Well, of course. And how did the firm signalize the event?"

"Good heavens! What's the firm got to do with it? I planted them with my old car and took a new one for it."

"Yes, of course. *L'état c'est moi.* I am the firm, a Preysing may say. And how is your father-in-law?"

"Thanks, he's fine. Still enjoys his cigar."

"Lord, the years I've known him now. When I think how he began with six Jacquard looms, in a little bit of a place—and now! Marvellous!"

"Yes, work tells," said Preysing, meaningly.

"Everyone talks of it. I hear you've built yourself a magnificent country house, regular castle, park and all."

"Well, yes. It's come to be quite a nice place. My wife's mad on it. She is a wonderful manager, you know. Quite taken up with her house. Yes, we have a charming place now at Fredersdorf. You must come and see us."

"Thanks. Thanks. Very good of you. Perhaps I may have a business trip to put through—with expenses paid."

After disposing thus of the conventional amiabilities, they got down to the matter in hand.

"A bit unsteady on the Bourse yesterday, wasn't it?" Preysing asked.

"Unsteady? I should say so. Bedlam is nothing in comparison. But since the boom in Bega the whole world has been crazed. Everybody thinks he can do business without security, but yesterday it broke. A thirty per cent drop, I tell you—forty per cent. There are lots who are dead and don't know it. Whoever is holding on to Bega—have you any Bega?"

"Had. Sold it out at the right moment," said Preysing—lying of course in the usual and traditional style customary in business; and Rothenburger knew it.

"Well, don't worry. They'll recover again," he said consolingly, exactly as though Preysing's no had been yes. "What on earth can you rely on when a bank like Küsel in Düsseldorf

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chuck all the shares they hold in your concern on the market, it's as good as saying: 'No, thank you. We have no further interest in the Saxonia Company.' The question remains—how to make the best of an unpleasant situation. Do you want to buy up any more of your own shares? You can get 'em cheap enough."

Preysing made no reply for the moment. He tried to think and this was no easy matter for him. General Director Preysing was an excellent fellow, correct, straightforward, of irreproachable character. But he was not a business genius. He lacked imagination, persuasiveness and push. Whenever he was asked to come to any important decision, he floundered on slippery ice. He could not even tell a lie with any power of conviction in it. He produced only little feeble abortions of business lies. He soon began to stammer and beads of sweat appeared on his upper lip beneath his moustache.

"If the Chemnitz people don't want the amalgamation, it's their business after all. They have more need of us than we of them. But for this new dyeing process they've got hold of, we should take no interest in the matter whatever," he said finally, and thought he had got out of it very cleverly. Rothenburger raised his ten thick fingers in the air and let them fall again on to the table just beside the saucer of honey. "But they *have* got the dyeing process and therefore the Saxonia *has* an interest in the matter," he said amiably.

Preysing had ten answers at once on the tip of his tongue. 'We lost nothing in the Küsel affair,' he wanted to say, and 'the English deal has by no means fallen through,' and 'the Chemnitz people have brought our shares down precisely because they do want to amalgamate—they'll make a better deal that way.' But finally, he said none of these things, but only blurted out: "Well, we shall see. I'm having a talk with the Chemnitz people the day after tomorrow."

Rothenburger puffed smoke from his throat. "A talk? Which of them are coming? Schweimann? Gerstenkorn? Smart fellows. You'll need your wits about you. That's a job for your father-in-law, if you don't mind my saying so. Well, while there's life there's hope. I must let that be known on the

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Fredersdorf 48 was not the factory but his home. It was not long before the call came through, and Preysing settled his elbows on the ledge for a soothing talk with his wife.

"Morning, Mulle," he said. "Yes, it's me. Still sleeping, Mulle? Still in bed?"

"What do you think?" the telephone answered in a distant but amiable voice—a voice that was very dear to the faithful and devoted Generaldirektor. "It is half past nine. I have had breakfast and watered my flowers. And you?"

"*Très bien!*" Preysing said a little too brightly. "I'm having a talk with Zinnowitz presently. Is it sunny with you?"

"Yes," said the telephone; it prattled on faintly in an intimate and homely way. "It is a beautiful day. Just think, all the blue crocuses have come out since yesterday."

Preysing could see the crocuses through the telephone, and the breakfast room with its wicker chairs, the bast-covered coffee pot, the table laid and the knitted cosies over the egg-cups. He saw Mulle too. She was wearing her blue dressing gown and her bedroom slippers and in her hand was a watering-can with a thin spout for the cactuses.

"You know, Mulle, I don't like it here," he said. "You ought to have come with me. You ought really."

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pleasant ten minutes that the General Director spent in Box No 4, Kringelein walked down the stairs enjoying at each step the raspberry-red carpet that made his downward progress such a splendid and unusual experience, and finally arrived at the Hall Porter's desk. Once more he had a flower in his buttonhole. It was the one of the evening before and after spending the night in his bedroom tumbler it was still moderately fresh. A white carnation. Kringelein felt that its spicy perfume put the last indispensable touch to his elegance.

"The gentleman you were asking for yesterday has arrived," the Hall Porter announced.

"What gentleman?" Kringelein asked in surprise. The Hall Porter looked in the book, "Preysing, General Director Preysing of Fredersdorf," he said, and gave Kringelein's peaky, unpretending face a sharp look. Kringelein breathed in so hard that it was almost a gasp.

"Oh, yes, of course. He's come? That's good. Thank you. And where is he?" he asked with blanched lips.

"In the breakfast room probably."

Kringelein walked away and pulled himself forcibly together. He braced himself up till the small of his back was hollowed. Good day, Herr Preysing, was what he would say. Having a good breakfast? Yes, I am staying in the Grand Hotel too. Certainly. Have you any objections? Is it not allowed perhaps for a man like me? Oh, no. People like us can live as they please, just like others.

Immediately afterwards he was thinking. Why this fear of Preysing? He can do nothing to me. I shall be dead very soon. No one can do anything to me. It was the same not unmixed feeling of freedom that he had felt long ago in Mickenauer forest among the wild raspberries. Swelled out with courage, he entered the breakfast room. He moved now with a certain confidence in these smart surroundings. He looked for Preysing. It was actually his intention to speak to him. He wanted to be even with him. That was precisely why he had come to the Grand Hotel.

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corner of the Winter Garden, which till midday was little frequented. Preysing's portfolio had emptied out its entire contents, his ashtray was full of cigar ends and the backs of his hands were moist with sweat, as they always were under the stress of exacting business discussions. Doctor Zinnowitz, a short elderly gentleman, with the face of a Chinese sorcerer, gave a little cough, as though he were about to make a speech in court, and tapping the bundles of papers in front of him with an authoritative air, spoke as follows:

"My dear Preysing, it comes to this, we enter the conference tomorrow at a substantial disadvantage. Our shares are in a bad way, both on paper and in fact." (Here he tapped the list of quotations in the midday edition of the *Berliner Zeitung*, which a pageboy had just brought in. It showed a further fall of seven per cent in Saxonia shares.) "Our shares are in a bad way and the psychological moment, if I may so express myself, for this critical interview has been ill-chosen. You know yourself, if the Chemnitz people say 'No' tomorrow, it is all over with the amalgamation. The question can never be raised again. And it is very possible that they will say 'No', as things are now. I don't say it is certain, but it is possible. It is even probable."

Preysing listened with impatience. He was in a nervous state. The lawyer's studied phrases irritated him. Zinnowitz always spoke as though he were at a board meeting, even if he were quite alone. When he rested his knuckles on the flimsy wicker table of the Winter Garden it became at once the fateful green baize-covered table of a board room.

"Should we cry off?" asked Preysing.

"To cry off is impossible without inviting the worst constructions," observed Zinnowitz. "There is the further question, too, whether even putting it off would be a gain or a loss. There are always chances that might be irretrievably lost by a postponement."

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with the enemy's position" (he liked to bring in the military expressions which he had learnt as a Captain in the reserve), "and I can tell you exactly how they feel about it. Schweimann has dropped all idea of the amalgamation and Gerstenkorn has begun to waver. Why? The big SIR combine is putting out feelers to ascertain whether the Chemnitz people can be bought out—not amalgamated, but bought right out. Of course, Schweimann and Gerstenkorn would remain as directors and be given salaried posts in addition, whereas now they are saddled with all the risks. On the other hand, if the affair with Burleigh's were in black and white, then—such at least is my humble opinion—they would turn down the offer from the SIR and amalgamate with you. That's their position. But what yours is with Manchester, there I am not quite so clear. I have a somewhat guarded letter from your father-in-law——"

Once again, Preysing interrupted the lawyer's clear exposition with a stupid question. "Is this offer of the SIR definite or only talk? How much have they offered?" he asked.

"That is beside the point," said Zinnowitz, who did not know. Preysing pushed forward his underlip and his cigar with it. It was not at all beside the point, he thought. But he could not explain why.

"The affair with Burleigh's isn't exactly in a bad way," he said hesitatingly.

"Not exactly in a good way either, it seems to me," the lawyer replied promptly.

Preysing stretched out a hand towards his portfolio, drew back and then finally took hold of it. He took his cigar out of his mouth, its end was chewed to pieces, and at last, at the third attempt, he pulled out a blue folder in which were filed letters and copies of the replies.

"Here is the correspondence with Manchester up to date," he said quickly and held out the file of letters. He had no sooner done so than he regretted it. The backs of his hands were once more in a sweat. He began to play with a ring on his finger, a habit of his, but it got him no farther. "In the strictest confidence, please remember," he requested urgently. Zinnowitz replied only by a glance out of the corners of his

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only—there are other reasons. There is the question of the effect on the management of the business. You understand what I mean. After all, it is I who have made the factory. It is all my organization. That being so I want to have the credit for it. The old man is getting on. And I don't hit it off with my young brother-in-law. I tell you that quite frankly. You know him, of course—well, we don't hit it off. He has brought new-fangled ideas with him from Lyons that don't agree with my notions of business. I am not for bluff. I don't care for sharp practice. I make my decisions on a solid basis. I don't build houses of cards. As long as I am there I intend to be reckoned with, and what I say is——"

Doctor Zinnowitz looked with keen interest at the heated General Director, who was beginning to talk irresponsibly. "You are well known in the trade as a model of business propriety," he remarked politely, and there was a hint of patronage in the tone of his voice. Preysing broke off. He took the blue folder and stuffed it back into his portfolio with trembling hands.

"We agree, then," said Zinnowitz. "The conference will take place tomorrow and we will do all in our power to get the draft agreement signed. If only I knew——"

"Listen," he continued after a moment's silent reflection. "Will you allow me to take one or two of the letters away with me? Some of the more promising ones, you understand me, dating from the earlier stages of the negotiations? I am seeing Schweimann and Gerstenkorn this afternoon. It would do no harm if—of course, I wouldn't show them the whole correspondence, only some of it——"

"Impossible," said Preysing. "We have promised Burleigh & Son to regard the matter as strictly confidential."

Zinnowitz smiled at this. "Why, it's common knowledge in any case," he said. "However, as you think best. It is your responsibility. Now is the time to show your mettle. Everything might turn on a skilful use of the negotiations with the Manchester people. It is the one issue on which we stand a chance of straightening out this somewhat involved affair with the Chemnitz concern. The thing would be to let one or two of

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First. You know her, don't you? She's been twenty years with me. Flamm the Second often helps us out when we have more typing on hand than the office can manage. I have taken her with me when I have had to go away on business and Flamm the First could not be spared. She is very quick and intelligent. I should have to have the copies by five o'clock. Then I'll manage it quite unofficially, as I am having dinner with the Chemnitz gentlemen. Flämmchen can bring me the copies direct to the office. I'll telephone at once to Flamm the First to tell her to send her sister here. What time have you engaged the conference room for tomorrow?"

Doctor Zinnowitz and General Director Preysing had quite the right air as they left the Winter Garden with their well-worn portfolios under their arms and crossed the corridor and passed by the Hall Porter's desk to reach the Lounge. Here there were many other men like them, all with the same kind of portfolios and all carrying on the same kind of discussion. But now a few women too had made their appearance, fresh from their baths and scented after their morning toilet. Their lips were neatly painted and they pulled on their gloves with careless ease before passing through the revolving door to the street whose surface was bathed in yellow sunshine.

Just as they were crossing the Lounge to the telephone room, Preysing heard his name called. Pageboy No 18 was going along the passage calling out at regular intervals, in his clear, careless, boyish voice: "Herr Direktor Preysing! Herr Direktor Preysing of Fredersdorf! Herr Direktor Preysing!"

"Here," called out Preysing and put out his hand for the telegram. "Excuse me," he said and read it as he walked beside Doctor Zinnowitz through the Lounge. He went cold to the roots of his hair as he read it.

The telegram ran: 'Negotiations with Burleigh and Son finally broken off. Brösemann.'

That's finished it. You need not send for the typist, Herr Doktor. It's finished. Manchester is done with, thought Preysing while he drew nearer all the time to the telephone room. He stuck the telegram into his coat pocket and gripped it there spasmodically between his thumb and forefinger. Finished

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the box. "Flämmchen will be here at three. There are plenty of typewriters in the hotel. I shall have the letters by five. I'll speak to you on the phone before the conference. We'll bring it off yet. Au revoir."

"Au revoir," said Preysing to the whirling reflections of the revolving door as it ejected the lawyer into the street. Outside the sun was shining. Outside a small destitute man was selling violets. Outside no one was worried by amalgamations and troublesome contracts. Until Doctor Zinnowitz finally disappeared in a taxi, Preysing kept the telegram tightly gripped in his right-hand coat pocket. He now took it out and holding it in his left hand went to a table in the Lounge. There he carefully smoothed it out and folded it neatly together, and then he put it in the breast pocket of his neat dark grey suit.

At five minutes past three the telephone roused Herr Preysing from his afternoon nap. He jumped up from the couch on which he had lain down after taking off his shoes and collar and coat. He had that comfortless and disagreeable feeling which is the usual result of snatching a few minutes' sleep in an hotel. The heavy yellow curtains were drawn. The room was full of the dry hot air of the central heating. His right cheek was marked by the impress of his travelling cushion. The telephone rang on insistently. A lady was waiting for Herr Direktor in the Lounge, the Hall Porter announced. "Send her up," said Preysing and began hastily to make himself tidy. Unexpected difficulties, however, were made in the most polite manner through the telephone. The hotel had its rules and regulations. Rohna, the reception clerk, himself communicated them to Herr Preysing with many apologetic regrets and the smile of a man of the world. It was not allowed to receive ladies in one's bedroom and unfortunately no exceptions could be made. "But, good heavens! this is no visit from a lady. It's my secretary, as you can see for yourself, and I have some work for her," Preysing said impatiently. The smile of the reception clerk became only the more audible. The director was requested to be so good as to take the lady to the room

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to look, but looked all the same. "Step-sister," said Flämmchen. "I am the daughter of my father's second wife. But we get on quite well."

"I see," said Preysing and looked at her with troubled eyes. So now she was to make copies of letters from a correspondence that was finished with, that was utterly senseless, utterly unreal. For months he had been counting on the agreement with Burleigh & Son, reckoning on it in all his plans, and he could not readjust himself all at once. It was simply beyond him to wipe out this affair utterly from his mind. Finally broken off. Brösemann. Finally. There was a letter to Brösemann to dictate as well, a stinger. To the old man, too, about the forty thousand. If the Chemnitz affair fell through tomorrow, the forty thousand for steadying the market had been thrown to the winds.

"Right. Come along to the writing-room, then," said Preysing, and filled with gloom he preceded her along the corridor. Flämmchen with a smile of amusement kept her eyes on the roll of flesh at the back of his neck as she followed him.

Already the typewriters could be heard in the distance like faint machine-gun fire, with their bells ringing at regular intervals. When Preysing opened the door volumes of cigar smoke came eddying out in huge coils. "Fine room for hearing in," said Flämmchen and gave a little sniff. Inside the room a man was walking to and fro with his hands behind his back and his hat on the back of his head, dictating in a nasal American voice. He was the manager of a film company. He looked Flämmchen up and down with the rapid glance of a connoisseur and went on dictating.

"This won't do," said Preysing and slammed the door again. "I must have the room to myself. There's annoyance at every turn in this hotel."

This time he walked behind Flämmchen along the corridor. He was in a rage now, and in the midst of his rage the swaying of Flämmchen's hips warmed and pricked his senses. In the Lounge Flämmchen once more attracted all eyes. She was a magnificent example of the female form—of that there seemed no possible doubt. Preysing found it extremely unpleasant to

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And Gaigern answered equally enchanted, "You promise hen? You'll dance this evening?"

"I can't. I've work to do. But I'm free tonight."

"But bother it, I'm not. What about tomorrow? Or the day after tomorrow at five o'clock? Here in the yellow pavilion? That's settled then?"

Flämmchen licked her spoon clean, and said nothing.

What was there to say in any case? You picked up acquaintances as you lit a cigarette. You took a few puffs just as you felt inclined and then you trod it out.

"What is your name?" Gaigern asked meanwhile.

"Flämmchen," she said promptly. Immediately upon thi: Preysing came up to the table with a proprietary air, an(Gaigern politely made way for him by getting up and standin behind his chair.

"We can get along now," said Preysing irritably.

Flämmchen extended a gloved hand to Gaigern while Pre: sing looked on with displeasure. He recognized Gaigern as tl man who had come out of the telephone box and once again saw his face so distinctly that every pore and every little li in it was revealed.

"Who is that?" he asked as he crossed the Lounge Flämmchen's side.

"Oh, an acquaintance," she replied.

"Indeed. You have a number of acquaintances, no douł

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Flämmchen inspected her hands and then she drew her sleeve up a little way and looked earnestly at her brown skin. "That's the snow. I went ski-ing at Vorarlberg. A friend of mine took me with him. It was glorious. You should have seen me when I got back. Shall we make a start, then?"

Preysing took a turn through the room, which was thick with cigar smoke, and began to dictate from the farthest corner.

"Date—you've got the date? Dear Herr Brösemann, Bröse—got that? Referring to your telegram of this morning, I have to inform——"

Flämmchen carried on with her right hand while with her left she removed her hat, which she appeared to find in her way. The room looked on to a dark ventilation shaft and was lighted by green-shaded electric lights. In the midst of these business matters Preysing could not help thinking of a chest of drawers, an old chest of drawers of birch wood in the entrance hall at Fredersdorf.

It came back to him at night when he woke up after dreaming of Flämmchen. Her hair had the colour, the flame-like sheen of old birch wood, and the lights and shadows of its grain. This hair of hers was clearly before his eyes as he lay in bed at night, breathing the dry air of the hotel bedroom, while the lights of the electric sign flitted across the drawn curtains. The portfolio on the table in the darkness got on his nerves. He got up and put it in his trunk, rinsed his mouth once more with Odol and once more washed his hands. His suite annoyed him. It was dear and uncomfortable. It consisted of a minute room with a sofa, a table and chairs, and a small bedroom with a bathroom beside it. The bath tap dripped and the drip, drip, drip pursued him till he fell asleep. Once again he got out of bed and set an alarm clock. He had forgotten to buy the razor and would have to be early at the barber's. He fell asleep and again dreamed of the typist and her birch-wood

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a little notebook bound in shiny black cloth, which he had brought with him from Fredersdorf, and he sat at it for hours together. He entered his expenses in it, the reckless expenses of a man who was learning to enjoy life and spending a month's salary in two days. Sometimes he was so dizzy that all the four walls with their wallpaper of tulips seemed to fall in upon him. Sometimes he was happy, not entirely happy nor as he imagined the rich being happy, but all the same, happy. Sometimes, again, he sat on the edge of his bed and thought of his approaching death. He thought of it hard and with horror, while his ears went cold and he blinked in anguish of heart. In spite of all, he could make nothing of it. He hoped that it would be much the same as going under chloroform, except that you came to again after chloroform and found yourself in a bad way and in agonizing pain—blue pain Kringelein had called it in his own mind—and also that all those familiar tortures were now to be borne beforehand, not afterwards. When he had thought as far as this, he began to shudder. Yes, Kringelein actually shuddered at the thought of death, although he could form no idea of it.

There were a good many behind the locked double doors of the sleeping hotel who could not sleep. Doctor Otternschlag, indeed, about this time of the night laid a little hypodermic syringe down on his washhand-stand and, throwing himself on his bed, floated away on the light clouds of a morphine trance. Witte, the conductor, who had Room No 221 in the left wing, could not sleep either. Old people sleep so little. His room was the counterpart of Doctor Otternschlag's. There, too, the water gurgled in the wall and the lift rumbled up and down. It was little better than a servant's room. He was sitting at his window, pressing his forehead against the window-pane and staring at the blank wall opposite. Fragments of a Beethoven symphony were going through his head. He had never conducted it. He heard Bach—the tremendous 'Crucify Him' from the Matthew Passion. I have wasted all my life, thought old Witte, and all the never-sung music of his life made a lump in his throat and he gulped it down. There was the rehearsal for the ballet at half past eight in the morning. He would sit at the

a little notebook bound in shiny black cloth, which he had brought with him from Fredersdorf, and he sat at it for hours together. He entered his expenses in it, the reckless expenses of a man who was learning to enjoy life and spending a month's salary in two days. Sometimes he was so dizzy that all the four walls with their wallpaper of tulips seemed to fall in upon him. Sometimes he was happy, not entirely happy nor as he imagined the rich being happy, but all the same, happy. Sometimes, again, he sat on the edge of his bed and thought of his approaching death. He thought of it hard and with horror, while his ears went cold and he blinked in anguish of heart. In spite of all, he could make nothing of it. He hoped that it would be much the same as going under chloroform, except that you came to again after chloroform and found yourself in a bad way and in agonizing pain—blue pain Kringelein had called it in his own mind—and also that all those familiar tortures were now to be borne beforehand, not afterwards. When he had thought as far as this, he began to shudder. Yes, Kringelein actually shuddered at the thought of death, although he could form no idea of it.

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young man from Nice. Grusinskaya took him with her into her veronal dream. He was in Room No 69 and he was the handsomest man she had ever seen. . . .

He whistled softly on his way to his room, not unpleasantly, and merely because he was happy. He was careful in his room to make no noise and when he was in his pyjamas and smart blue leather slippers he was more silent than ever. There was something of the wild cat in this handsome young man. Whenever he passed through the Lounge it was as if a window of sunshine were opened in a cold room. He was a marvellous dancer, cool, and yet passionate. There were always flowers in his room. He loved them and their scent. When he was alone he stroked and even licked their petals—like an animal. He was quick to follow girls in the street. Sometimes he would merely look at them with pleasure, sometimes he would speak to them, and sometimes he would go home with them or take them to a second-rate hotel. Next morning the Hall Porter would smile, when with a feline and innocent air he made his appearance in the elegant and more or less irreproachable Lounge of the Grand Hotel and asked for his key. Sometimes too he got drunk, but in so amiable and high-spirited a fashion that no one could take it amiss. In the mornings it was not very pleasant to have the room beneath his, for then he went through his physical exercises, and soft thuds came at regular intervals through the ceiling. He wore smart bow ties and low-cut waistcoats. His clothes sat as easily on his muscular body as the hide on a pedigree animal. Sometimes he went off in his little four-seater and nothing more was seen of him for a couple of days. For hours together he pottered about in automobile showrooms, sticking his head under the bonnets of motor cars, breathing in petrol, lubricating oil and the smell of the warmed-up engine, tapping the chassis, stroking the enamel, the leather and the upholstery, blue, red or beige. If he was left alone, perhaps he would lick this too with his tongue. He bought laces from street vendors, cigarette lighters that would not light, little birds of india-rubber and countless boxes of matches. Suddenly a longing for horses would come

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has paid out five thousand already. Do you suppose that's going on for ever? Emmy's been lying low at Springe for the last month, ready to take over the goods. In Paris it was a washout. At Nice it was a washout. And if you don't bring it off today it will be a washout here too. If Schalhorn is planted with the five thousand, he'll——"

"Is Schalhorn boss?" asked the Baron, sprinkling eau-de-Cologne into the palms of his hands.

"A boss should be able to do the job. That's what I say," grumbled the chauffeur.

"When the time comes, certainly. It doesn't suit me to work the way you and Schalhorn do. The two of you are always messing things up. I've never yet messed a thing up and Schalhorn has never yet been let down. If Emmy is getting nervous at Springe, she's no use to me, and so I told her last time. If she can't keep quiet in her art workshop and let Möhl get on with his copies of antique settings——"

"We don't care a curse for your copies of antiques. Get hold of the pearls first. Then you can get on with your antiques. All that's only one of your notions. It looked all right at first. The pearls are worth 500,000. True enough. And after reckoning two months' expenses there'll still be something left. It may be true that we could get rid of them better in antique settings. Good. Granted. Meanwhile Möhl stays at Springe making copies of your grandmother's jewellery, Emmy's getting mad and Schalhorn's getting mad. Only don't trust the woman, I tell you. If she loses patience she might play you a dirty trick. So what's to be done? When are you going to leave off amusing yourself and get down to business again?"

"You're getting hungry again, are you? You've forgotten the twenty-two thousand you had from Nice and now you are turning nasty, are you," said the Baron, still in tolerably good humour; he had now put on the black silk socks with white silk sock suspenders and the smart patent-leather shoes which he wore to dance in. Otherwise he was still naked.

There was something about this easy, careless nakedness that irritated the chauffeur. Perhaps it was the loose fall of the shoulders or the supple play of the ribs beneath the skin as

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"What? She just leaves them, she hasn't even handed them over to be kept in the hotel safe? What? You can just go into her room and take them?"

"Pretty well," said Baron Gaigern. "Now I want to rest a bit," he said to his gaping accomplice. He saw the gaping mouth with its black and decayed teeth and a sudden fit of rage came over him at the thought of the kind of men he was mixed up with. The muscles of his neck contracted.

"Out," was all he said. "Be at the main entrance with the car at eight."

The chauffeur looked at Gaigern's face and retreated meekly. He could not utter a word of all he had on the tip of his tongue. He even picked up the blue pyjamas from the floor with the servility of a valet, and concluded his report in a whisper. "The man in No 70 is harmless. A wealthy eccentric who has come into a fortune and is chucking his money about."

The Baron paid no further attention. The chauffeur passed between the two doors and superstitiously spat three times over his shoulder. Then he silently shut the door behind him.

Just before eight that evening the Baron made his appearance in the Lounge. He was in excellent form. He was wearing his blue raincoat over his dinner jacket and it never entered the head of Pilzheim, the hotel detective, that this engaging Apollo was industriously preparing an alibi.

Doctor Otternschlag, who was sitting in the Lounge with the exhausted Kringelein over coffee before going to see Grusinskaya together, raised one stiff finger and pointed it straight at the Baron. "Look, Kringelein, there's the sort of fellow one ought to be," he said with envious mockery.

The Baron put a coin into the hand of Pageboy No 18. "My kind regards to your girl," he said and stepped to the Hall Porter's desk. Senf looked at him with alert though sleepless eyes. (It was now the third night and still he had to keep his anxiety to himself.)

"You've got my seat for the theatre? Fifteen marks? Fine,"

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a floor lower on to the zinc roof of a balcony. He felt his throat getting dry and he husbanded his breath like a runner on a cinder track. Once more he came to a halt, supported himself for a moment at the risk of his life on the toe of one foot and then got the rear leg half a metre farther on. He whistled softly. He was wrought up to a high pitch now and so he whistled and kept a cool head. As to the pearls, for the sake of which he was there, no thought of them entered his head. After all he could have got hold of them in several other ways. He could have given Suzette a blow on the head when she left the theatre at night with the suitcase. He could have broken into Grusinskaya's room at night. Or finally, four steps along the passage, a skeleton key, and an innocent air if he were discovered in the wrong bedroom. But that was not his way. It was not his way at all. "Everyone must do as his nature bids," as Gaigern had tried to explain to his confederates, that little band of crooks whom for two and a half years he had kept balanced on the verge of mutiny. "I don't catch game in snares. I don't go up mountains by the funicular. What I can't take with my own hands I'll do without."

Obviously talk of this kind opened up whole realms of misunderstanding between him and his accomplices. They made little account of courage, though they all had an adequate share of it. Emmy—with her trim auburn hair—had attempted an explanation. "He makes a sport of it," she said. She knew Gaigern well and probably she was right. Now, at any rate, at twenty minutes past ten, as he clung to the façade of the Grand Hotel, he was like a rock-climber in a difficult chimney or the leader of a raid about to attack a dangerous position.

The chief danger lay in the projecting bay behind which lay Grusinskaya's bathroom. Here the architect's fancy had chosen smooth surfaces. Also there were no window ledges, for the bathroom was tucked away behind and looked out upon the courtyard where the Baron had been observed staring up at the aerials. On the other side, however, of this smooth space, two and a half metres in extent, was the iron railing of the balcony of Room No 68. Panting slightly and whistling and cursing by turns, Gaigern paused before making the final

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then he found himself hanging on by the railings of the balcony, with the corners of the iron pressing deeply into his fingers. He let himself hang there for a second with his heart thumping, then he drew himself up like an acrobat on a trapeze, got over the railing, and let go. Yes, he lay now on the balcony with the door open into Grusinskaya's room.

"There we are," he said with satisfaction, and for the moment lay where he was on the narrow cement-floored balcony and recovered his breath. Far overhead he heard the engine of an aeroplane and then he saw straight above his eyes the gleam of its lighted cabin moving across the lurid haze that hung over the city. The street below sent up its loud confused roar. For a few minutes Gaigern lay as though on an island of exhaustion and semi-consciousness, while beneath him motor cars hooted impatiently to reach the entrance, for the League of Humanity was giving a banquet in the Little *Salon* and women in opera cloaks were creeping like coloured beetles out of closed motor cars and ascending the three steps into the second entrance of the hotel. Lord, what wouldn't I give for a cigarette, thought Gaigern, but this relief to his exhausted nerves was out of the question. He pulled the glove off his right hand and sucked the cut on his forefinger. A bleeding paw would never do for the job he was on. The thin metallic taste vexed him. He felt the welcome coolness of the cement against his moist back. The return journey would be more difficult, he reflected, and looking through the railing of the balcony he measured the distance with his eyes. He had a rope with him. He would have to attach it to the balcony and swing himself across. "Congratulations," he said to himself in the smart officer's voice of his army days. He pulled on his glove again as though he was about to pay a ceremonious call and getting up stepped from the balcony into Grusinskaya's bedroom.

The French window did not stir, only the curtain swayed gently in the air. The parquet floor, too, was pleasingly silent. Two clocks ticked in the dark room, one nearly twice as fast as the other. There was a surprising scent, suggestive of a funeral or a cremation. From the electric sign over the way

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half metres across a surface as smooth as ice with a suitcase weighing about four pounds between one's teeth. Gaigern drew back his hand and thought again. He turned on the torch and gazed at the two locks of the little case in deep absorption. God alone knows what secret mechanism kept Grusinskaya's treasure safely shut up there. As an experiment Gaigern took out a tool and pressed on the round brass disc of the lock.

The lock sprang up.

The case was not locked at all!

Gaigern started at the snap of the spring. It was so utterly unexpected that his face for the moment looked perfectly blank. "Well, that's good," he said to himself three or four times. "Well, that's good." He raised the lid and opened the jewel case. Yes, there lay Grusinskaya's pearls.

They were no more after all than a little heap of baubles, very little, if you think of it, compared with all the tales that had been spread abroad about this gift of a murdered grand-duke for the adornment of a dancer's neck. An old-fashioned and charming *sautoir* and a rope of medium-sized but perfectly matched pearls, three rings, two earrings with incredibly round and large pearls—there they lay idly in their little bed of velvet while the torch waked their slumbering reflections. Taking every precaution Gaigern removed them from their case with his left hand and put them in his pocket. It struck him as so ridiculous to have come upon these pearls lying open and unprotected that he felt a reaction almost of sobering disappointment. He was exhausted after tremendous exertions, which after all were superfluous. For a moment he even wondered whether he might not simply regain his room along the passage. Perhaps they have left the bedroom door open as well, he thought, with the incredulity which since his first sight of the pearls had kept his upper teeth exposed in a foolish and childish smile.

The door, however, was locked. In the corridor the lift could be heard ascending at irregular intervals and the gate closing with a click, for Room No 68 was very nearly opposite it. Gaigern sat for a few moments in an armchair in the dark and collected his strength for the return journey. His longing

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The big electric lamps on the front of the hotel had gone ›ut. The new installation had gone wrong again. In the little ›anqueting-room the League of Humanity sat in darkness, and n the cellar electricians were busy with the switches without ıvail. Below in the street a small crowd stood and stared with delight at the hotel front, where the four arc lights went spasmodically on and off. Among them was a policeman. Traffic was held up and motor cars were loudly showing their impatience. The electric signs opposite were in full play, proclaiming brands of champagne and doing their utmost to illuminate the hotel front. Finally two men in blue overalls crept out of a window of the storey below, established themselves on the glass roof over the main entrance, and began to investigate the faulty wires. Now that the hotel front was a centre of interests the way back across those seven metres of it was finally blocked.

Congratulations, thought Gaigern again and laughed angrily. Here I am and if I want to get out I shall have to break open the door.

He took out his tools and torch and began, with all due precaution, to fiddle about with the keyhole; but without success. A dressing gown hanging near the door fell to the ground It touched his face softly as it fell and the fright it gave hir was beyond all bounds. He felt the arteries of his neck pulsin; like machines. The corridor, too, outside was in a stir. Foot steps went to and fro, people coughed, the lift-gate clicked a the lift went up and down, a chambermaid called out and ra past and another one called back. Gaigern gave up the refra‹ tory door and stole out again on to the balcony. Three metr‹ below the two electricians straddled about on the glass ro‹ with wires in their mouths. They were being watched wi great interest from the street. Gaigern committed one of h characteristic audacities. Leaning over the railings he call out: "What's up with the light?"

"Short circuit," said one of the men.

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with lights. Kringelein would not have been surprised if he had woken out of the deep trance of an anæsthetic to find himself in his hospital bed again. His feet were cold, his hands cramped and his jaws clenched. His head was like a burning cauldron and all the thousand and one things thrown into it began to sizzle and melt.

"Well, are you content? Are you happy now? Are you getting to know life?" Otternschlag asked from time to time. And Kringelein stoutly and obediently answered, "Yes, rather!"

On this evening, the fifth of Grusinskaya's appearance, the theatre was poorly patronized. It was positively empty. The stalls were so scantily occupied that they looked ragged and moth-eaten, and the one or two people in the front row felt isolated and self-conscious amid so many empty seats. Kringelein felt the same. Except for the stage box, which he had taken at Otternschlag's advice—Kringelein wished from now onwards always to have the best seats, at the cinema far back, at the theatre well in front and for the ballet the front row—except for their box, which had cost him forty marks, only one other was occupied and this by the impresario, Meyerheim. Meyerheim had dispensed with the *claque* for this performance. It no longer justified itself and the deficit was already big enough. There was a slight outburst of applause before the interval. Pimenov quickly rang up the curtain, and Grusinskaya came to the front of the stage and smiled. She smiled to a silent house, for the feeble applause had forthwith expired and everyone trooped out to the buffet. Something, too, expired in Grusinskaya's face as she stood there to acknowledge an ovation which after all was denied her. Her skin went cold beneath the sweat and the paint. Witte threw down his baton and rushed on to the stage up the iron steps. He was anxious about Elisaveta. He found Pimenov standing there as though at a funeral, while scene-shifters dumped down bits of scenery right against his lean old bowed back in its old dress coat. He was always in full dress for every evening performance, as though any evening the Grand Duke Sergei might summon him to his box. Michael, with a leopard skin of spotted plush

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"Michael," she whispered. She recognized his shadowy form as it glided past the back of the drop scene.

"Madame," answered Michael with cautious reserve. He had changed his costume and now wore a brown velvet doublet and carried a bow and arrow in his hand, for he was dancing his Archer Dance after the interval.

"Aren't you going to get ready, Gru?" he asked, carefully avoiding a sympathetic tone, when he saw how small and crumpled she looked as she sat huddled up amidst the lumber. The manager's bells rang from eight places at once.

"Michael, I am tired," said Grusinskaya, "I want to go home. Lucille can dance my numbers. It won't matter to anyone. They don't care whether it is I who dance or someone else."

Michael started so violently that he stiffened in every muscle. Grusinskaya, sitting on the step with his knee close to her face, saw the magnificent muscle of his thighs distend and this involuntary movement in a body she knew so well comforted her a little. Michael had gone pale under his paint. "Nonsense," he said. He was rude from dismay.

Grusinskaya smiled tenderly. She put out a finger and tapped Michael on the leg.

"How often have I to tell you to dance in tights?" she said with unusual tenderness in her voice. "You will never really warm up, never be really supple without tights. Believe me when I tell you that, you—revolutionary." She let her hand rest for a few seconds on the warm powdered and youthful skin beneath which his fine muscles stood out. But no, the touch communicated no strength. The bell sounded for the third time. On the other side of the drop scene, with its painting of a little temple, the ballet shoes of the dancers were already scraping over the floor of the stage. Suzette was running up and down the dressing-room passage in an agony like a strayed hen, because Madame sat there instead of changing her costume. Witte, standing at the conductor's desk, took his baton with trembling hand and waited with a set face for the red light which ought before this to have signalled the commencement of the next dance.

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Curtain and applause. There was even fairly vigorous ap-
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and with the dust of the stage on her hands and arms and
temples. For the first time in her life there was no encore for
this dance. I can do no more, she thought. No, I have done
enough. I can do no more.

"Clear the stage for the next dance," shouted the stage
manager. Grusinskaya had no wish to get up. She wished to
lie there in the middle of the stage and to fall asleep—to sleep
and forget it all. At last Michael came and raised her to he
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Grusinskaya stole away to her dressing-room and push
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forward at every step. A florist's window threw a glare of [illegible]e light at her feet. She stopped and looked in. There were great bowls with bunches of magnolia. There were cactuses and spiral glasses with orchids growing out of them. But she found not the faintest comfort in all the delicate beauty of the flowers. Her hands were cold, as she now felt for the first time, and she began to search for gloves in the pockets of her old cloak. This was quite absurd, because for eight years past she had only worn this cloak behind the scenes as a protection against the draughts that blow through every theatre in the world. In her mind's eye she saw stage machinery and iron doors with red lamps above them, and the smooth slant of the stage sloping away at her feet. Never again, she thought, never again. The old-fashioned cloak was long. It hid her costume, but it hindered her movements. She pulled it up higher after leaving the window of the flower shop and turned aimlessly into quieter streets. She saw a Buddha in a shop window as she passed by. His quiet gilded bronze hands seemed as though they wished to bring calm to her crumbling world. Never to dance again. Never, never again. She tried to gain comfort from consoling words, but they came in sobs from her throat. Sergei, she cried, Gabriel, Gaston. She called on the names of her few lovers. Anastasia, too, her daughter, and finally even Ponpon, her little grandson in Paris, whom she had never seen. But she was still alone with no one to console her. Suddenly she stopped with a start. What am I doing, she thought. I have run away from the theatre, I can't have done that. It isn't possible. I must go back. A church clock struck eleven slowly and clearly close at hand, though no church tower was to be seen. Grusinskaya took her hands from the pockets of her cloak and let them fall in front of her. The gesture recalled the death of the wounded dove. Too late, the gesture said. The performance must be just ending. Grusinskaya threw back her head and looked at the street she was in, and found that she did not know where she was. She saw a small entrance framed in blue and yellow electric lights and over it the words: 'Russian Bar.' She went across and stood at the door. She blew her nose like a child while she made up her mind. Russian Bar,

forward at every step. A florist's window threw a glare of white light at her feet. She stopped and looked in. There were great bowls with bunches of magnolia. There were cactuses and spiral glasses with orchids growing out of them. But she found not the faintest comfort in all the delicate beauty of the flowers. Her hands were cold, as she now felt for the first time, and she began to search for gloves in the pockets of her old cloak. This was quite absurd, because for eight years past she had only worn this cloak behind the scenes as a protection against the draughts that blow through every theatre in the world. In her mind's eye she saw stage machinery and iron doors with red lamps above them, and the smooth slant of the stage sloping away at her feet. Never again, she thought, never again. The old-fashioned cloak was long. It hid her costume, but it hindered her movements. She pulled it up higher after leaving the window of the flower shop and turned aimlessly into quieter streets. She saw a Buddha in a shop window as she passed by. His quiet gilded bronze hands seemed as though they wished to bring calm to her crumbling world. Never to dance again. Never, never again. She tried to gain comfort from consoling words, but they came in sobs from her throat. Sergei, she cried, Gabriel, Gaston. She called on the names of her few lovers. Anastasia, too, her daughter, and finally even Ponpon, her little grandson in Paris, whom she had never seen. But she was still alone with no one to console her. Suddenly she stopped with a start. What am I doing, she thought. I have run away from the theatre, I can't have done that. It isn't possible. I must go back. A church clock struck eleven slowly and clearly close at hand, though no church tower was to be seen. Grusinskaya took her hands from the pockets of her cloak and let them fall in front of her. The gesture recalled the death of the wounded dove. Too late, the gesture said. The performance must be just ending. Grusinskaya threw back her head and looked at the street she was in, and found that she did not know where she was. She saw a small entrance framed in blue and yellow electric lights and over it the words: 'Russian Bar.' She went across and stood at the door. She blew her nose like a child while she made up her mind. Russian Bar,

through his fingers. For a moment it seemed to him idiotic and absurd that this handful of pearl-coloured grains should be worth a fortune. Four months of lying in wait, seven metres at the risk of his life, and no sooner was one risk over than a new one took its place. One danger after another. His life was nothing but a string of dangers. And the life of this Grusinskaya was a string of pearls. Gaigern shook his head and laughed in spite of the fix he was in. Gaigern was no thinker. Life often made him laugh with astonished amazement, almost simple-mindedly, for it was somewhat beyond his comprehension. Now, at any rate, he pulled himself together and, turning towards the room behind the lace curtains, he proceeded to wait.

First Grusinskaya stood motionless for nearly a minute in the middle of the room just below the glass-shaded hanging light and it seemed from her face that she had lost herself. She stood there till her cloak fell of its own weight from her drooping arms, and then she stepped over it to the telephone on the table. It was a minute or so before she got through to the theatre and again a minute or two before she got Pimenov, but she was too utterly weary to be impatient.

"Hallo, Pimenov. Yes, it's Grusinskaya. I am in the hotel. You must forgive me. Yes, I was unwell suddenly. My heart, you know. I could scarcely breathe. Yes, like that time in Scheveningen. No, I'm better now. It must have put you in a fix, I know. How did Lucille get on? What? Oh, fair. And the audience? What's that? No, I am not upset. You can tell me if there was a scene. No? No scene at all? Went off quietly? Not much applause? A different programme you think? Good. We'll talk it over. No, I'm going to bed. No, no doctor, please. Nor Witte either. No, no, no, I want nobody. Not Suzette either. I only want to be left in peace. You will drive, please, to the French Embassy and make my excuses. Thank you. Goodnight, my dear. Goodnight, Pimenov. Listen, Pimenov, my greetings to Witte and to Michael too, and all the rest as well. No, don't worry about me. I shall be all right tomorrow. Goodnight."

She replaced the receiver on its hook. "Goodnight, my

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in an asylum waiting to die. Poor Nijinsky! Poor Gru! I am not going to wait. The moment has come—now—now—now—now——

She stood still and listened as though she heard her name called. The veronal was already humming drowsily in her ears and its narcotic influence subdued her to a welcome indifference. Gaston, she thought as she went to the table. Dear Gaston, you were good to me once. How young you were! And how long ago it is! Now you are a minister, fat and bearded and sleek. *Adieu, Gaston. Adieu pour jamais, n'est-ce pas?* There is such an easy way of growing no older. . . .

Grusinskaya poured out another cup of tea. She was now posing a little, playing in sweet sadness a little tragic scene. There was a manner and a grace in her despairing resolve. With a rapid gesture she took the bottle of veronal tablets and emptied them all into her tea and then waited for them to melt. It took too long and she tapped them impatiently with the teaspoon. Then getting up she went once more to the looking-glass and began unconsciously powdering her face which was of a sudden beaded with cold sweat. Her lips ceased trembling and assumed the fixed stage smile. She put her hands in front of her face and whispered: God! God! God! Now too she noticed the funereal scent which rose from the basket of faded flowers and hung in the air of the room. She went over unsteadily to the table and tasted the cup of tea with the tip of the spoon. The taste was very bitter. She dropped in one lump of sugar after another with the sugar tongs and waited for them to melt. This took a minute or perhaps longer. In the stillness the clock and the watch raced each other breathlessly.

Grusinskaya got up and went to the door on to the balcony. Her breath came with difficulty and she had a longing to look at the sky. She drew back the lace curtain and collided with a shadowy figure.

"Please do not be alarmed, Madame," Gaigern said with a bow.

Grusinskaya's first movement was not one of alarm, but—oddly enough—of shame. She drew her kimono more closely

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n earlier than usual. It is my bad luck. I can give you no explanation."

Grusinskaya stepped back a pace or two into the room, without taking her eyes off him, and turned on the cold light of the chandelier that hung from the ceiling. Very likely she might have called for help if it had been a rough and ugly man that she had discovered on her balcony. But this man, handsomest man she had ever seen in her life—as she now brought to mind through a cloud of veronal—caused her no alarm. Strangely enough, it was Gaigern's charming blue silk pyjamas that more than all filled her with confidence.

"But what did you want here?" she asked, and involuntarily she lapsed into the more familiar French.

"Nothing. Only to sit here. Only to be in your room," he said softly. He took a deep breath. There was nothing for it now but to tell the woman a fairy tale. He could see that, with a faint gleam of hope. The telltale socks over his shoes worried him; adroitly and surreptitiously he stepped on each in turn and pulled them off.

Grusinskaya shook her head. "In my room? *Mon Dieu!* What for?" she asked in her high-pitched bird-like Russian voice, while a strange look of expectancy shone in her face.

Gaigern, still on the balcony, replied: "I will tell you the truth, Madame. It's not the first time I have been in your room. Many a time I have sat in your room when you were at the theatre. I have breathed the air you breathe. I have left flowers for you. Forgive me——"

The tea with the veronal in it was cold. Grusinskaya smiled faintly, but she was no sooner conscious of doing so than she recovered herself and asked severely, "And who let you in? The chambermaid? Suzette? How did you get in?"

Gaigern resolved on a bold stroke. He pointed behind him into the night. "From there," he said, "from the balcony."

Again Grusinskaya had the feeling, as though in a dream, of having been through this before. Suddenly the memory came back. One evening at a castle in the south, down in Abas Tuman, where the Grand Duke Sergei used to take her, a young officer, a mere boy, had hidden himself in her room. It

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"You know why—because I love you."

He said it in French. It would have been too difficult in his native tongue. Having said it, he waited in silence to see how it worked. This is sheer madness, he thought meanwhile. He was bitterly ashamed of this humiliating farce. Such a breach of taste was an agony to him. Still—unless she rang—perhaps he was saved.

Grusinskaya drank in these few words of French with open mouth. They entered into her like medicine. In a few seconds she even ceased to shiver. Poor Grusinskaya! It was years since anyone had said anything of that kind to her. Her life rattled past like an empty express train. Rehearsal, work, contracts, sleeping-cars, hotel rooms, stage fright, agonies of stage fright, and then more work and more rehearsals. Successes, failures, critiques, interviews, official receptions, quarrels with managers. Three hours of work by herself, four hours' performance, each day like the last. Old Pimenov. Old Witte. Old Suzette and not a soul else, never any warmth. You held your hands to hotel radiators and that was all. And then when all was over and done with and life had come to the verge of the abyss, a man appeared in your room at night and spoke those long-forgotten words with which in other days the whole world had rung. Grusinskaya collapsed. She felt a sharp pang as of childbirth. But it was only two tears wrung at last and at last released from the stress of that night. She was conscious of these tears through her whole body, even in her toes and the tips of her fingers and then in her heart, and at last they reached her eyes and rolled off her long, thickly painted eyelashes to fall on the open palms of her hands.

Gaigern saw all this and it made him go hot. Poor creature, he thought, poor little woman. Now she is crying. This is really silly.

After the first two painful tears it was easier. They were followed by a light but copious shower, warm and cool at once like summer rain. Gaigern could not help thinking of the beds of hydrangea at Ried, though he could not tell why; then came a passionate downpour, a torrent that brought with it all the black paint from her eyelids, and finally Grusinskaya threw

"You know why—because I love you."

He said it in French. It would have been too difficult in his native tongue. Having said it, he waited in silence to see how it worked. This is sheer madness, he thought meanwhile. He was bitterly ashamed of this humiliating farce. Such a breach of taste was an agony to him. Still—unless she rang—perhaps he was saved.

Grusinskaya drank in these few words of French with open mouth. They entered into her like medicine. In a few seconds she even ceased to shiver. Poor Grusinskaya! It was years since anyone had said anything of that kind to her. Her life rattled past like an empty express train. Rehearsal, work, contracts, sleeping-cars, hotel rooms, stage fright, agonies of stage fright, and then more work and more rehearsals. Successes, failures, critiques, interviews, official receptions, quarrels with managers. Three hours of work by herself, four hours' performance, each day like the last. Old Pimenov. Old Witte. Old Suzette and not a soul else, never any warmth. You held your hands to hotel radiators and that was all. And then when all was over and done with and life had come to the verge of the abyss, a man appeared in your room at night and spoke those long-forgotten words with which in other days the whole world had rung. Grusinskaya collapsed. She felt a sharp pang as of childbirth. But it was only two tears wrung at last and at last released from the stress of that night. She was conscious of these tears through her whole body, even in her toes and the tips of her fingers and then in her heart, and at last they reached her eyes and rolled off her long, thickly painted eyelashes to fall on the open palms of her hands.

Gaigern saw all this and it made him go hot. Poor creature, he thought, poor little woman. Now she is crying. This is really silly.

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I had a cigarette, he thought, feeling that he was getting tenderhearted. Grusinskaya had looked in his eyes for a moment with a strangely melting and almost happy expression. Now she got up and angled with her long toes for the slippers which had fallen from her feet. She recovered her self-possession.

"There, there," said she. "What a sentimental scene. Grusinskaya weeping. That is a sight worth seeing. It is many years since she did such a thing. Monsieur gave me a bad fright. It is he who is responsible for this painful scene."

She spoke in the third person, wishing to put a distance between them, but after what had passed it was not easy to do so. Gaigern had nothing to say in reply.

"It is frightful how the stage frays the nerves," she went on, in German, for she thought that he had perhaps not understood. "Discipline! Oh yes, we have plenty of that. But discipline is horribly exhausting. Discipline means always doing what you don't want to do and take no pleasure in doing. Have you experienced the weariness that comes of discipline?"

"I? Oh, no. I do only what I take pleasure in doing."

Grusinskaya raised a hand to which all its former grace had returned.

"I see, Monsieur. You take pleasure in coming into a lady's bedroom, and you come. You take pleasure in a dangerous climb on to a balcony, so you do it. And what is your pleasure now?"

"I should like to smoke," Gaigern said frankly. Grusinskaya had expected something else and the reply struck her as chivalrous and considerate. She went to the writing-table and held out her little cigarette box. She stood there in her much-worn, but genuine Chinese kimono and her trodden-down slippers, and all the charm and glitter and prestige which for twenty years had surrounded her on her travels throughout the Continent, surrounded her once more. She had forgotten apparently how tear-stained and utterly wretched she looked.

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then kissed her deliberately in the beautiful hollow between her shoulder blades.

This kiss, at first cool and remote, lasted long. It penetrated to her spine like a burning needle and her heart began to beat. Her blood became thick and sweet. Her frigid heart began to throb and flutter. Her eyes closed, and a tremor went through her. And Gaigern was trembling, too, when he released her and stood upright. A vein stood out blue on his forehead. Of a sudden his whole being was aware of her skin, of the sharp scent of her body, of her slowly awakening anticipation of delight. The Devil, he thought abruptly. He stretched out eager hands.

"I think you had better go now," Grusinskaya said weakly to his reflection in the glass. "The key is in the door."

Yes, the damned key was there now right enough, and now he could go when he chose. But now he didn't choose—for more reasons than one.

"No," he said with a sudden air of command to the woman, who trembled like a still vibrant violin. "I am not going. You know that I'm not going to go. Do you really think I should leave you alone here—I—you?—with a tea cup full of veronal? Do you think I don't know the state you are in? I am going to stay with you. *Basta!*"

"*Basta? Basta?* But I wish to be alone."

Gaigern quickly went up to her, took hold of her wrists and held them to his breast. "No," he said vehemently. "That is not the truth. You do not want to be alone. You are horribly afraid of being alone. I know well how afraid you are. You don't escape me. I know you, you strange little woman. It's no use play-acting with me. Your theatre is of glass and I see through it. You were desperate just now. If I go away now you will be more desperate than ever. Say I'm to stay with you. Say it."

He took her by the shoulders and shook her. He was wrought up, she knew. Otherwise he would not have hurt her. Jerylinkov had begged, she remembered. This man commanded. Weak and relieved she let her head fall on the breast of his blue silk pyjamas.

"Yes, stay a moment," she whispered. Gaigern looked away

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"No woman ever made me so happy."

"Say it again—say it."

"I have never been so happy."

Gaigern murmured into the cool softness of her arm where his head lay. It was the truth. The indescribable appeasement filled him with gratitude. He had never known this in his commonplace love affairs—this intoxication without disillusionment, this thrilling calm after the embrace, this deep intimacy of the body with another's body. His limbs lay relaxed and at peace beside hers, their senses shared a mutual secret. He experienced something that has no name, not even the name of love, a homecoming after long homesickness. He was still young, but in the arms of the ageing Grusinskaya he became still younger through the spell of her tender, experienced and thoughtful caresses.

"What a pity," he murmured into her arm; he pushed up his head a little higher and made a pillow of her shoulder, a little warm nest where there was the scent of a meadow. "I would know you anywhere in the world blindfold by your scent," he said, sniffing like a puppy. "Tell me what it is."

"Never mind. Tell me what is a pity? Never mind the scent, it has the name of a little flower that grows in the fields—*Neuwjada*. I don't know what you call it. Thyme? It is made for me in Paris. Tell me, what is a pity."

"That one always begins with the wrong woman. And so one goes on stupidly, night after night, believing that it must always be like that. What a pity that the first woman one sleeps with is not like you?"

"Oh, you're a spoilt child," whispered Grusinskaya. She buried her lips in his hair. It was warm and thick and strongly growing, with a masculine odour of cigarettes and hairwash. He passed his fingertips down her sides and felt her breath come and go.

"Do you know, you are so light. As light as anything. No more than a little foam on a glass of champagne," he said in tender admiration.

"Yes. I have to be light," Grusinskaya answered gravely.

"I should like to look at you. May I turn on the light?"

"No woman ever made me so happy."

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his own head behind in the hotel if no one looks after him. They all rely on me, and this evening I wasn't there. There will be a regular *débâcle*. Lucille has only been waiting for the chance to make a row. Their names are never in large enough type on the posters. They're never given a proper chance. But they never do a thing for themselves. If I don't hold the whip over them, they go to pieces. They have made me short-tempered and conceited and tired. Heavens, how tired I was yesterday. How little was needed to show them where they would be without Grusinskaya. But now I am not a bit tired. I could get up and dance the whole programme, or a new programme, or a new dance. I must talk to Pimenov about it. A dance of dread, oh, I could dance that for you now. At first on one spot only and only a tremor, and then three circles on the toes, or no, not on the toes perhaps, perhaps something quite different.

But I live, I live, she thought in a transport. I shall dance new dances and I shall have success. A woman who is loved always has success. You left me starving for ten years nearly now. That's what it was. To think that a foolish boy who comes climbing in over the balcony can give one such strength. A spoilt child who knows nothing of love but the silly talk of girls.

She pulled up the bedclothes and covered Gaigern up like a little child. He murmured gratefully and nestled against her. Their bodies were intimate, but in their thoughts they went their own ways like strangers. All the lovers in the world lie thus—so close together, and so far apart.

It was the woman who first began to grope after the mysteries of the other's soul. She took his head in her hands and held it as though it were a large and heavy fruit, gathered in the sun.

"I don't even know your name, my friend," she whispered in his ear.

"I am called Flix. In full Felix Amadei Benvenuto Freiherr von Gaigern. But you must christen me too. I want you to give me a name of your own."

Grusinskaya reflected a moment then she smiled softly.

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fixed round their chest to prevent them growing any bigger. I was small and lean, but as hard as a diamond. Ambitious too. I had ambition in my blood like pepper and salt. Duty made a machine of me. There was nothing but work, work, work. No rest, no leisure, never a pause. And then, fame always brings loneliness. Success is as ice-cold and as lonely as the north pole. And what it means to keep your grasp on success for three years, for five years, and twenty years, always on and on, but why do I tell you all this? Can you understand me? Listen. Often when you pass by a railway station waiting-room or motor in the evening through a small town, you see people sitting motionless in front of the door with stupid faces and their hands lying heavily on their knees. You, too, are tired and you wish you too could simply sit with your hands before you. Well, try it, when you are famous, disappear from the world and take your rest, let others dance, leave it to those ugly clumsy Germans and negresses, and all the other incompetents, let them dance and take your rest. No. You see, Benvenuto, it can't be done. It's impossible. Work is hateful, you curse it. But you can't exist without it. Three days' rest, and at once you are in a panic. I'm losing my form, I'm getting heavy, my technique is going to the Devil. You have to dance. It's an obsession. No drug, no morphine or cocaine and no vice in the world gets such a hold as work and success. I can assure you of that. You have to dance, you have to dance. Besides, it's important. If I give up dancing, believe me there will not be a single person left in the world who can really dance at all. All the rest are *dilettanti*. But this hectic and hideously practical world of yours cannot get on without someone who can dance and who knows what dancing means. I learned from celebrated dancers of my youth—Kchesinskaya, Trefilowa—and they in their turn had it handed down from the great dancers of forty and sixty years ago. Often I feel when I dance that I am dancing to defy the whole world. You all shout 'To-day, today,' and there you all sit, a theatreful of money-makers, motorists and war-service men and shareholders, and there am I—just little Grusinskaya, no longer young, a thing of yesterday, and all my steps have been known for two hundred years.

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never danced and still might dance. A hundred true and living figures rose before her eyes. A beggar woman stretched out trembling hands; an old peasant woman danced for the last time at her daughter's wedding. A haggard woman stood in front of a booth at a Fair and went through her poor tricks. A prostitute waited for men under a lantern. Here stood a servant girl who had broken a dish and was beaten for it, and here was a fifteen-year-old child forced to dance naked before a large, flashy man, and here stood the skinny caricature of a governess. There was one who ran as though pursued though no one followed her, one who wanted to sleep and dared not, one who was afraid of a looking-glass, and there was one who drank poison at last and died.

"Keep still, don't speak and don't move," Grusinskaya whispered and she stared up at the ceiling with its sword of light. The room had taken on that utterly strange and enchanted appearance often encountered in hotel bedrooms. Beneath the window a number of cars whirred and groaned like wild beasts, for the banquet of the League of Humanity was over and the departures from Entrance No II were in full swing. The night had grown cooler. Grusinskaya came back out of the whirl of her fancies with a start and a shudder. Pimenov—with his new butterfly ballet—will think I have gone out of my mind. Perhaps I have? The flight of her fancy had only lasted a minute, yet she returned from it to her bed as though from a long journey. Gaigern was still there. She was almost astonished to find this man still there against her shoulder and to feel his hair and his hands and his breathing.

"What kind of a man are you?" she asked again as she laid her face to his in the darkness. She was deeply conscious at this moment of her astonishment over such intimate closeness, when in so much they were strangers. "Yesterday I did not even know you. Tell me who you are," she asked with her lips close to his. Gaigern was about to fall asleep. Now he put his arms round her. She felt like his lean greyhound bitch at home.

"I? There's little to be said of me," he answered obediently, but without opening his eyes. "I am a prodigal son. I am the

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"You must never do anything like that again. You must stay here. I shall never let you go. I need you," he said. He heard himself saying these astounding words in a husky voice that seemed to come directly from the depths of his heart.

"No, now it is different. Now it is all right again. You are with me now," Grusinskaya whispered. He could not understand, for she said it in Russian. But he heard the tone of her voice and this was enough to tune the night once more to rapture. Dream-birds started from the branches of the hotel wallpaper. He forgot the pearls in the pocket of his pyjamas, and she forgot her failure and the deadly dose of veronal in the tea cup.

Neither ventured on that fragile word—love. Together they glided into the vortex of their night of love. They went from an embrace to whispered talk, from whisperings to sleep and dreams, from dreams to more embraces. These two had come together from the ends of the world to meet for a few hours in the hotel bed of Room No 68 where so many had slept before them. . . .

Love had played no great part in Grusinskaya's life. All the passion of her body and soul went into dancing. She had had one or two lovers, because, like the pearls and a motor car and clothes from the best dressmakers of Paris and Vienna, they were part of the life of a celebrated dancer. Though she had been besieged, courted and pursued by numbers of men who had fallen in love with her, she did not in her heart believe in the existence of love. It seemed to her as unreal as the painted drop scenes, the temples of love and the banks of roses which formed the settings for her dances. But though she was cold and insensitive to love, she was esteemed a wonderful mistress. She herself practised love as a duty imposed by her profession, a part to be played that might sometimes please but always fatigued her and called for a high degree of art. To the nights she spent with her lovers she gave all the suppleness of her body, its hovering grace, its subtlety, its tenderness and its

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fell.

There was a dance in Grusinskaya's repertoire in which lov and death danced a *pas de deux*. Youthful poets had occasion ally sent her verses harping on the theme that love and deat were brother and sister. Grusinskaya this night lived this lyric commonplace in her own person. The dazed agony of the even ing had changed to rapture. It had become an ecstasy of grat tude, a feverish grasping and taking and feeling and holding The frozen years had thawed. The secret shame of her cold ness, concealed all her life within herself, melted away. It wa true of her no longer. She had been so wretched and lonely fo years past that sometimes she had craved a pittance of warmt from the warm, young body of her partner, Michael. And nov tonight in this ordinary hotel bedroom, in this bed of polishe brass, she felt herself glow and pass into new being. Love i whose very existence she had disbelieved had been revealed t her.

Owing to the similarity between Rooms No 68 and No 69 Gaigern did not at once realize where he was when he awoke Thinking that he was turning towards the wall in his own room, he encountered the sleeping, breathing form of Grusin skaya. Then he remembered. The deep and wonderful inti macy of their first sleep together weighed sweetly on his limbs He slipped his cramped arm under her neck and thought wit a tender solemnity of the events of the night. Without a doub he was in love, in love in a sweet and utterly grateful fashio such as he had never known. Quite apart from the pearls, h thought, not without shame, quite apart from this ill-fate affair of the pearls, I am a rotter. I climb into a room and pla an atrocious farce, and the woman believes in it. She posi tively likes it. Every man acts a part and every woman believe it. Every man is really a swindler and an intruder at the ou set, but then later on—well, it has come true. I love you, litt Mouna, dear little Neuwjada. Yes, I love you, *je t'aime, j t'aime*. You have made a fine conquest, little woman.

It was cool in the room. Outside it must be nearly daylight

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It was cool in the room. Outside it must be nearly daylight.

the carpet and as far as the bed where Grusinskaya lay asleep.

She lay now stretched at full length, her head thrown back sideways on the pillow. The bed was far too large for her small slender form. Gaigern, for whom most hotel beds were too short, was amused and touched. He had a sudden tender inspiration. He took the tea cup full of veronal from the table and the empty glass tube too, and went with them into the bathroom. He emptied the cup, washed it as carefully as a nurse would do for a child, and dried it on his handkerchief. Childishly, he kissed the sleeves of Grusinskaya's bath gown which he found there. As there was nowhere else to put the empty glass tube, he put it in his pocket with the pearls. Grusinskaya sighed in her sleep when he returned. He bent over her attentively, but she was still asleep. It had grown lighter and he now saw her face quite clearly. Her hair had fallen smoothly back from her face and exposed the narrow temples with their shadowed hollows. Two deep wrinkles beneath the closed eyes showed the approach of age. Gaigern saw it, but it did not displease him. Her mouth over the delicate though faded chin was wonderful. There was a little powder still on her forehead with its indented line of hair. Gaigern remembered with a smile that she had pulled out a powder box from under the pillow before she allowed him to turn on the bedside lamp. I see you now, anyway, he thought with a primitive feeling of triumph in his conquest. He scrutinized her face, as though it were new country in which he went to seek adventure. He found two mysterious symmetrical lines descending from her temples past her ears to her neck as thin as threads, and lighter in colour than the rest of her skin. He passed his finger lightly over them. They were fine scars that framed her face as though they were the edges of a mask. Suddenly Gaigern realized what they were. They were vanity scars, incisions in the skin, with the object of stretching it and preserving its youth. He had read of such things. He shook his head with an incredulous smile. Involuntarily he grasped his own temples. They were smooth and braced by the strong and healthy beat of his pulse.

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half their reputed value. In any case, it cost him little to say goodbye to them now.

Grusinskaya tried to wake up, but she found her head swathed in sleep. The veronal, she thought, and closed her eyes. She had been afraid of waking lately. She dreaded the shock of facing the hard and naked facts of her life. She had a dim idea that something welcome and pleasant awaited her this morning, but at first she did not know what it was. She moistened her lips and found the sleepy parched taste of the night on them. She moved her fingers as a dog stirs in its sleep. Her body was utterly tired out, but she was profoundly happy, as she was after an evening of many encores when she had to expend her last ounce of energy. She felt the light of day beat on her closed eyelids, and for a moment she thought she was at Tremezzo, where the reflected light from the surface of the lake shone into her bedroom of rose and grey. She decided to open her eyes.

At first she saw an unfamiliar quilt over her knees that rose like a mountain before her eyes; then the hotel wallpaper with red tropical fruits on slender stems, a pattern calculated to fix the eyes in a feverish and senseless stare. The weariness of a life of incessant travel was bound up with such wallpaper. The corner of the writing-table was dim, for the curtain there was still drawn, and she could not see the time on the clock. The door on to the balcony was open and a cool air came in. Near the dressing-table her sleepy gaze discerned the broad black silhouette of a man outlined against the light from the balcony. He stood with his back turned to her and his legs apart. He was motionless and entirely unconcerned, and his bent head showed that he was occupied over something; but what it was she could not see. Surely, thought Grusinskaya, I was dreaming of this just now. She was still too dazed with sleep to be frightened. Surely I have lived this before, she thought next. Jerylinkov, she concluded at last. Suddenly her heart pulsed like an engine. She was wide awake and remembered everything.

She breathed with closed lips, stealthily but deeply, and with each breath all the memories of the past night came rush-

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"*Que faites-vous?*" she whispered to the executioner's back. She meant to cry out, but only a whisper came from her stiffened lips. "What are you doing?"

Gaigern gave so violent a start, that his head spun right round. His fright spoke as clearly as a confession. Besides, he held in his hands the cube-shaped case of a ring; the suitcase was open, strings of pearls lay on the glass top of the dressing-table.

"What are you doing there?" Grusinskaya whispered again. That her blanched and distorted face smiled as she spoke, was piteous enough. Gaigern too understood her at once, and again his pity was so intense that he felt it beat in his temples. He held himself with an iron grip.

"Good morning, Mouna," he said affectionately. "I have come on a wonderful treasure while you were asleep."

"What are you doing with my pearls?" Grusinskaya asked hoarsely. Tell me a lie, tell me a lie, her distraught face implored him. Gaigern went to her and veiled her eyes with his hand. Poor creature, poor little woman.

"It was very rude of me to rummage about among your things," he said. "I was looking for some plaster, or a bandage of some kind, and I thought to myself there would be something of the sort in the little dressing case. But it was your treasures I found. I feel like Aladdin in the cave——"

Even her eyes had lost their colour and become leaden. Now their dark tint came back slowly. Gaigern, to convince her, showed her his right hand which was still bleeding a little. The tension was released and from sheer weakness Grusinskaya let her lips sink on his hand. Gaigern put his other hand on her hair and drew her to his breast. He could be fairly brutal and domineering with the women he usually had to do with. But this one, for some mysterious reason, called forth all his better instincts. She was so fragile, exposed to such dangers and so much in need of protection—and at the same time so strong. His own existence, always trembling on the edge of a precipice, taught him to understand hers.

"You silly——" he said tenderly, "did you think I had an eye on your pearls?"

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Madame will please call him on the phone as soon as Madame is up."

Madame considered for a moment.

"In ten minutes, Suzette—no, in a quarter of an hour you can bring in my tea, and then we'll make short work of the massage."

She put back the receiver but held it still in her hand, while she extended the other to Gaigern who stood in the middle of the room, lightly poised on the chrome-leather soles of his boxing shoes. After a moment she took up the receiver again. The Hall Porter replied with a dutiful promptitude, though he had not closed an eye all night, for his wife in hospital seemed to be in a bad way.

"Number, please?" he asked smartly.

"Wilhelm 7010. Herr Pimenov."

Pimenov was not staying in the hotel. He was in a second-class pension that a family of Russian emigrants had started in the fourth floor of a house in Charlottenburg. Nobody there was awake yet, apparently. While Grusinskaya waited she had a vision of old Pimenov hurrying to the telephone in his old silk dressing gown, with his narrow feet which were always turned out, as though for the fifth position. At last she heard his gentle, nervous old man's voice.

"Oh, Pimenov, is that you? Good morning, *dobroje utro*, my dear. Yes, thanks, I slept very well. No, not too much veronal, only two. Thank you, *tout va bien*—heart, head and all the rest. What? What is it? Michael has burst a blood-vessel in his knee? But, good heavens, why didn't you tell me this last night? This is awful. That will go on—well, we know how long that will take. And what have you done? What? Not yet? But you must wire to Tchernov, at once, do you hear? He must come to the rescue. Meyerheim must see to that. Where is Meyerheim? I'll ring him up at once. Too early? Pardon me, my dear, if it is not too early for us, it is not too early for Herr Meyerheim—please. And has the scenery gone to the station? But it must go, please, with the first shift—when does the first shift start work? At six? If it is not there I shall hold you responsible, Pimenov. I can take no excuse. You are the

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meant to sound like a complaint, but her vitality and the pleasure she took in tackling things were irrepressible. "It has all got to be done. And then Michael says there's too much *chi chi* about Grusinskaya. That is what he calls *chi chi*, as though it were an amusement."

Gaigern stood in front of her, hungry for a little tenderness and intimacy. And indeed she held out both hands to him, but her thoughts were elsewhere. She was thinking of Michael's burst blood-vessel. And then she heard the race of the clock and the watch, and quickly seizing the telephone rang up Suzette once more. "Wait another ten minutes, Suzette," she begged her politely and rather guiltily. Her eyes fell on the table and last night's tea cup. There it stood washed and clean, looking utterly innocent and harmless, with the fantastic crest of the hotel in gleaming gold on its thick porcelain. What a mad night, she thought. Such things don't happen. And dances such as I imagined last night cannot be danced. It was my over-excited nerves. The Viennese would hiss me off the stage if I appeared in dances like that instead of the wounded dove and the butterflies. Vienna is different to Berlin. There they know what Ballet is.

Meanwhile she was staring into Gaigern's face, but she did not see him. This caused him a pain that was new to him, a vivid and peculiar pain in his chest. "Thyme—*Neuwjada*," he said softly, drawing the word from the deepest rapture of the night. Its scent came with it, the bitter and also the sweet and the unforgettable. And, indeed, at this invocation, Grusinskaya turned her eyes to him again and her face took on a tense look of suffering although she smiled. "I suppose we must part now——" she said in a voice loud and inflexible in case it broke.

"Yes——" Gaigern answered. He had forgotten the pearls. They were actually and utterly erased from his memory. He was conscious of nothing but the grip and stress of his feelings for this woman, and the infinite desire to be good to her, good, good, good. Helplessly he turned the signet ring with the Gaigern crest in lapis lazuli round his finger.

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give myself a holiday, six weeks or eight. We shall do nothing but live. We shall live. Everything else shall be left behind, all the nonsense, and we'll do nothing but live. We'll be perfectly silly from sheer idleness and happiness—and then you'll go with me to South America. Do you know Rio? I—no, enough: It is time. Go—go, and thank you."

"In three days at the latest," said Gaigern.

Grusinskaya quickly assumed something of the great lady.

"See that you don't compromise me too much in getting back to your room," she said as she shut the double doors behind him.

As Gaigern released his hand without a word from hers he felt it hurt him. It was bleeding again. The passage was deserted. The doors ran together in the long perspective and boots slept lop-eared at their thresholds. The lift was descending and someone in a hurry to catch a train was running along the passage on the third floor. One of the frosted-glass windows on the stairs was open to let out the cigar smoke of the night before. Gaigern stole in his boxing shoes over the pineapple carpet to Room No 69 and opened the door with a skeleton key. For the other was still hanging, for the purpose of his alibi, on the board above the Hall Porter's desk.

Grusinskaya had her bath and then gladly resigned herself to Suzette's hands for massage. She felt strong, elastic and full of energy. She had a boundless desire to dance and longed for her next appearance. She was sure that a success was in store for her. She was always a success in Vienna. She felt it already in her legs and hands, in her neck as she threw back her head; in her mouth that would not stop smiling. She dressed and went off like a top with the whip behind it. She plunged with irresistible energy into the morning's business, the dispute with Meyerheim, the subterranean battle with the disaffected members of the company and the patient management of Pimenov and Witte.

At ten o'clock, Pageboy No 18 brought a bouquet of roses. '*Au revoir*, beloved lips,' was written on a scrap of paper torn from an hotel envelope. Grusinskaya kissed the signet ring with the Gaigern crest. "*Porte bonheur*," she whispered as

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WITH THE treachery common to alarm clocks, General Director Preysing's failed to rouse him from sleep with the thoroughness and punctuality expected of it. At half past seven it emitted a brief raucous rattle, and that was all. Preysing, whose mouth was open and parched, moved a little in his sleep and the springs of his bed murmured in response. A gleam of sun showed behind the yellow curtains. Then at eight o'clock the Hall Porter duly aroused him by telephone, but by that time it was far too late. Preysing held his drowsy head under the shower bath, cursing his forgotten razor. It needed no more to deprive such a slave to routine of all joy in life. In spite of being late he wasted several minutes selecting a suit to put on. And when he had decided on his morning coat, he took it off again in a fit of impatience. He calculated—and perhaps wi reason—that morning coat would put him at a disadvanta His grey lounge suit, on the other hand, would show the Che nitz people at once that the whole affair meant very little him. He made unusual haste, but by the time he had put av all his cases and oddments, searched for, discovered pocketed all his keys, looked once more through his papers once more counted his money, it was after nine. He shot of his room and at once collided with a man in the passag

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portrait in oils of the founder of the Grand Hotel, presented an appearance of the highest solidity. Doctor Zinnowitz had his papers all ready to his hand, and old Gerstenkorn presided at the head of the superfluously long table. He acknowledged the new arrival by rising only slightly in his chair, for he belonged to the same close-fisted generation as Preysing's father-in-law. He had known Preysing as a young man and had no great opinion of him.

"Behind time, Preysing," he said. "Quarter of an hour's grace, eh? A late night? Yes, we all know Berlin!"

He laughed with a bronchitic wheeze and pointed to a chair at his side. Preysing sat down opposite Schweimann. He had the objectionable feeling of having got out of bed on the wrong side and his upper lip was moist under his moustache, even before the show began. Schweimann, who had red edges to his eyelids and the large protruding and flexible mouth of an ape, introduced a third gentleman.

"Our colleague, Doctor Waitz," he said.

Doctor Waitz was a young man who looked absentminded, but was far from being so. With his domineering and aggressive trumpet of a voice he could be a very ugly customer in a discussion. So the Chemnitz people had brought *him* along with them, thought Preysing.

"We've met before," he said without enthusiasm.

Schweimann offered the General Director a cigar across the table and Doctor Zinnowitz took a fountain pen from his breast pocket and laid it down on the table beside his papers. Farther down the table, on the far side of the water-bottle and the glasses which quivered on a black tray whenever a motor bus went by, there was still another person, a colourless individual, Flamm the First. She held her shorthand block in her hand. In appearance she was elderly and faded, with a thin white moth-like dust on her cheeks. She was silent and businesslike and by no means easily to be mistaken for Flamm the Second.

"That's a nice fountain pen," said Schweimann to Zinnowitz. "What make is that? Very nice."

"Do you like it? Got from London. Nice, isn't it?" said

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Zinnowitz read out these, after all, very satisfactory figures, and Preysing listened to them with pleasure. Everything in the business was above board and in order, and the output from waste products, which alone brought in marks 300,000 gross, had been organized by himself. He glanced at Gerstenkorn. Gerstenkorn, in the meditative and rather simple fashion of the old and sly, was swaying his grey scrub of a head to and fro. Schweimann was fussing with his cigar and did not appear to listen. Waitz checked every figure that was quoted by some notes which he had in a small book bound in leather. Flamm the First, a model of a private secretary, strove to efface herself by staring at the reflections in the water-bottle, while she held her pencil like a small sharp fixed bayonet. Zinnowitz drew forth another lot of papers from the pile before him and passed on to consider the position of the Chemnitz Manufacturing Company. His long thin Chinese beard bobbed up and down as he spoke.

The Chemnitz Manufacturing Company—as the figures showed—was an appreciably smaller undertaking. It had scarcely half the assets and its balance sheet revealed an extremely shaky state of affairs. The least possible had been written off, but nevertheless an astonishing high dividend was shown. The annual turnover was high. The net receipts, however, were scarcely in proportion. For all that, the Chemnitz Company showed a surprisingly large balance. Zinnowitz's voice as he read the last figures implied that he begged leave to query them, and he looked at old Gerstenkorn.

"Rather more," said Gerstenkorn. "Rather more. You can put it at 250,000 marks in round figures if you like."

"You can't reckon in that fashion," said Preysing, who had got nervous. "You have to make allowance for the depreciation of the new machinery for the new process. You cannot simply write off the old machinery."

"Yes, we can. Yes, we can," said Gerstenkorn obstinately.

Doctor Waitz trumpeted: "Our figures are under-estimated rather than over-estimated."

Doctor Zinnowitz handed a paper across to the General Director, who proceeded to study the figures on it with close

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and to see through it all, to keep a clear view of the whole question. He took one or two hotel envelopes that were lying on the table and scribbled down notes on them secretly and agitatedly like a schoolboy in a fix.

Doctor Zinnowitz, for his part, threw the merest glance towards the trusty Flamm the First, and she duly took down the aggressive remarks in shorthand on her blue-lined block. Doctor Waitz summed up in his bellowing voice. No, it was not to be imagined that the shareholders in the Chemnitz Manufacturing Company were going to submit to an amalgamation that halved the value of their stock. There was no occasion whatever, in his opinion, to give the Saxonia priority over the Chemnitz Company, supposing an eventual (he mouthed the word 'eventual' like a strolling player) fusion between the two. Why should this flourishing concern be brought into submission, as it were, and shoved into a corner?

Zinnowitz looked at Preysing, and Preysing obediently began to speak. It was his habit to give utterance to matters of importance in a low and nasal voice and with a dreary lack of emphasis. He employed this method of showing an outward calm and superiority because inwardly he had no confidence in himself. The backs of his hands were moist as he threw himself into the battle. Schweimann's eyes crept like little grey mice out of the red cavities where they lived, and Gerstenkorn stuck his thumbs in his waistcoat with the air of a man who was enjoying himself. Such conferences took place every day in the Grand Hotel—here in this 'great pub' many a job was rigged which afterwards the shareholders had to make the best of. Sugar went dearer, silk stockings cheaper, coal short—these and a thousand other contingencies depended on the issue of battles fought out in the conference chamber of the Grand Hotel.

So Preysing spoke, and the longer he spoke in that voice of his that sounded as if it had been kept on ice, and the closer he came to grips with the business, the more ground he lost. Gerstenkorn's telling little interjections whistled in the air like bullets. There were moments when Preysing would gladly have turned tail and fled from the field, dropped the whole

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the amalgamation. They don't see the fun of pulling the hot chestnuts out of the fire for your cotton business. So now you have it straight. Our position has improved appreciably since you first approached us. Yours has remained stationary, if I am not to be rude and say it has deteriorated. Under the circumstances—to speak plainly, my dear Preysing—the amalgamation has lost its attraction for us. We have come here this morning with instructions in our pockets under these circumstances to let the negotiations drop. At the time when you approached us, it was another story."

"We didn't approach you," Preysing said quickly.

"How can you say that, man? You did approach us. Doctor Waitz, please give me the correspondence. Here we are—on September 14th you approached us by letter."

"That's not correct," Preysing persisted obstinately, and he made a grab for the file of papers in front of Zinnowitz. "We did not approach you. Our letter of September 14th followed upon a personal exchange of views instigated by yourselves."

"If you talk of instigating, why, your old man sounded me in strict confidence as between old friends a good month before at."

"We did not approach you," said Preysing. He clung to this fact which was a mere side issue as though it were of vital importance. Zinnowitz sounded a warning note with his narrow feet under the table. Abruptly Gerstenkorn let the matter drop. He smoothed the green tablecloth with his square-shaped hands. "Right," he said. "*Bon!* Then you did not approach us, if that pleases you better. And whether you did or not, the circumstances were not the same as now. You will not deny that, Herr Generaldirektor?" (The change from the familiar to the official style sounded threatening.) "At that time we had reasons for wishing a close connection with the Saxonia Cotton Company. What reasons have we today?"

"You need more capital," said Preysing, quite rightly. Gerstenkorn swept this aside with two of his fingers.

"Capital! Capital! We have only to issue shares to have all the money we want chucked at us. Capital! There's one thing

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ment on that question," Preysing answered at once. He had prepared this reply long beforehand and learnt it by heart.

"Pity," said old Gerstenkorn. Whereupon there was a general silence lasting several minutes.

The bottle of water rattled on the tray because a bus was going by outside, and the surface of the water catching a ray of sun threw trembling rings of light on to the frame of the portrait in oils of the founder of the Grand Hotel. Preysing's brain worked feverishly during these seconds. He did not know whether Zinnowitz had shown those ominous copies of the letters—now so entirely meaningless and unjustifiable—to the Chemnitz people. Once again he had that unclean and uncomfortable feeling in his hands. His unshaven chin began to itch in a ridiculous way. From the corners of his eyes he threw his legal adviser a questioning and imploring glance. Zinnowitz, as though to soothe him, closed the lids of his oblique and sagacious Chinese eyes. This was an extremely obscure gesture. It might mean yes. It might mean no. It might mean nothing whatever. Preysing pulled himself together. I must see it through, he thought—though it was more a sensation than a thought.

"Gentlemen," he said, standing up—for the velvet upholstered chair made him hot and uncomfortable behind. "But, gentlemen, we must after all stick to the main point. The basis of all negotiations between us so far was our credit balance and the standing of the Fredersdorf manufactory. You have had every opportunity to look into that matter. Herr Kommerzienrat Gerstenkorn has satisfied himself personally as to the state of our concerns, and I must draw the line at vague and incalculable elements being brought into the discussion today. We are not speculators. I certainly am not a speculator. I deal with facts not with rumours. It is no more than a stock exchange rumour that we meditated a business arrangement with Burleigh & Son. I have had to contradict it once already and I cannot admit that——"

"You can't take in an old stager like me with a tale like that. We all know what such contradictions are worth," Gerstenkorn threw in. Schweimann perked up. He sniffed with

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the honest terms that a sound concern and an honest man had to offer. But that was not what people wanted nowadays. They wanted their hypothetical arrangements, their wild rumours, their manipulated booms with nothing behind it all but hot air. Knitted goods, jumpers and sweaters and gaudy socks from Chemnitz, he thought bitterly. He could see them now at that very moment—all these many-coloured and frivolous articles of fashion which captivated the world on the persons of equally frivolous young girls.

Zinnowitz talked on. Flamm the First had sunk again into a professional lethargy. Gerstenkorn and Schweimann scarcely listened to a word he said. They were bending over to each other and whispering together in a very ill-mannered fashion.

"Our friend, Preysing," the Justizrat was saying, "perhaps carries his scruples too far. His company is said to be on the point of concluding a very favourable agreement with the excellent old firm of Burleigh & Son. And what has Preysing to say to it? He resists the imputation as though he was being called a bankrupt. Granted that it is actually no more than a rumour—all the same, there is no smoke without fire, as we all know. And an old business man like Kommerzienrat Gerstenkorn will agree that some rumours are worth more than many a signed agreement. But as legal adviser for many years past to the Fredersdorf business, I may be permitted to say that the rumour foreshadows perfectly definite arrangements. You must forgive me, my dear Preysing, if I don't maintain the same inflexible discretion as yourself. There is no object in denying that negotiations of a far-reaching kind have already proceeded a long way. It may not be possible to say today whether they will reach their desired conclusion. But they are in existence and every bit as much a fact as any in your balance sheet. In my opinion, it reflects the highest credit upon Herr Preysing that in this quixotic fashion he refuses to throw this affair into the scales as an asset of his company. Nothing could be more straightforward and gentlemanly. But it gets us no further. So you will pardon me if I take these gentlemen into our confidence in this matter."

Zinnowitz floundered on with his conciliatory discourse,

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"Am I to conclude then that all prospects of an agreement with Burleigh & Son are over?" asked Gerstenkorn.

"Conclude what you like," said Preysing.

At this they were all silent for nearly a minute. Flamm the First discreetly turned the leaves of her block and the slight rustle of the paper broke the stillness of the conference chamber. Preysing looked like a sickly infant. It sometimes happened that from behind his managing director's face there peeped out the perplexed and obstinate look of a small boy. Zinnowitz, feeling that everything was over, was drawing little triangles on the cover of a file of papers with his malachite fountain pen.

"Then I suppose there's nothing further to be said for the present," Gerstenkorn said finally. "I suppose we may as well conclude our little discussion. We can always continue it in writing."

He got up, and his chair made grooves in the thick pile carpet of this very handsome conference chamber. Preysing, however, kept his seat. He took out a cigar with elaborate care, and with elaborate care cut off its end; then he lit it, took a pull and began to smoke with an abstracted and deeply meditative expression on his face. His cheeks were speckled with tiny red veins.

There is no doubt that General Director Preysing was a thoroughly respectable man, a man of principle, a good husband and father, a man who stood for organization and order and the strongholds of convention. His life went by programme. It lay open to inspection like a map, and the sight of it could not fail to please. It was a life of card indexes, of red tape, of many pigeonholes and much hard work. He had never yet committed the least irregularity. Nevertheless, there must have been a bad spot in him somewhere, a minute nucleus of moral disease which was destined to get a hold on him and bring him low. Yes, there must, in spite of all, have been just the merest trace of some inflammation, some microscopic speck on the irreproachable purity of his moral waistcoat. . . .

He uttered no cry for help at this fatal moment when the conference was broken off, though his plight was bad enough

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and everything he now said had vigour and power and energy. The founder of the Grand Hotel stared down at him full of admiration. Flamm the First bent her old-maidish and down-covered face over her block and took it all down in shorthand—for now that a final settlement seemed to be approaching, every word was of importance.

Preysing's new and inspired condition was maintained till the end of the conference, which went on for three hours and twenty minutes longer. It was only when he grasped the fountain pen of malachite green to append his signature by the side of Gerstenkorn's to the draft agreement, that he observed that his hands were once more moist and singularly unclean. . . .

"No 218 wants to be called at nine," said the Hall Porter to little Georgi.

"Is he leaving then?" asked little Georgi.

"Why should he be leaving? No, he's staying on."

"I only mean because he's never been called in the morning before."

"Well, you see to it, anyway," said the Hall Porter. And hence the telephone buzzed punctually at nine in Doctor Otternschlag's small and inexpensive room.

Otternschlag roused himself from his dreams as strenuously as any much-occupied man, and then he lay where he was and wondered at himself. "What's up?" he asked himself and the telephone. "What's up now?" Then for a minute or two he lay still and thought hard, with the disfigured side of his face pressed into the rough linen of the hotel pillow. Wait a bit, he thought—it's that Kringelein, poor fellow. We have to show him a bit of life. He's waiting for us. He's sitting waiting for us in the breakfast room.

"Shall we get up and dress?" he asked himself. "Yes, so we will," he replied after an effort, for he had a good sleeping draught of morphine in his veins. Nevertheless, there was a certain alacrity about him as he hurried here and there over his dressing. Somebody was waiting for him. Somebody was grateful to him. With one sock in his hand, he sat on the edge

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moment as the moment requires. I am a man of the moment in this sense, and I'm all the better for it. Come along now, and put a few thousand marks in your pocket and then we'll see whether there isn't some fun in life. And now, let's be off."

Kringelein got up obediently, and as he did so he felt that danger compassed him on every side. A few thousand marks, he thought, with his mind in a fog. A good day. One day at a few thousand marks. As he followed Gaigern he was still putting up a resistance, and the walls of the breakfast room danced before his eyes. He felt uprooted. His will was gone. His feet in their blacking-leather boots took their own way with him along the hotel passages. He was afraid. He was uncontrollably afraid of Gaigern, of the threatened expenditure, of the smart tailor; he was afraid of the grey-blue motor car as he got into the front seat; he was afraid of life, although he was afraid of missing it, too. He clenched his dilapidated teeth together, pulled on his cotton gloves and began his good day.

As Doctor Otternschlag at ten minutes to ten coasted round the walls of the Lounge searching for Kringelein, he was handed a letter by the Hall Porter.

> My Dear Doctor [it ran], I regret that I am unexpectedly prevented from keeping my engagement with you today. With respectful greetings, yours truly,
>
> Otto Kringelein.

It was Kringelein's style but no longer altogether his handwriting. Hard, jagged strokes had crept into the smooth copperplate hand, and the dots of the i's had a tendency to fly away, like balloons cut adrift, to burst somewhere in the sky with a lonely and tragic little report that no one hears. . . .

Doctor Otternschlag held the letter out in front of him. The Lounge was a dreary waste of endless vacant hours. He pottered along past the newspaper stand, past the flower stall, past the lifts and past the pillars to his customary seat. Frightful, he thought. Ghastly. Hideous! His leaden cigarette-stained fingers hung down, and he stared with his blind eye at the charwoman who, contrary to all orders, was beginning in broad daylight to sweep out the Lounge with moist sawdust.

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Gaigern cheered up and gave advice. "Have that," he said, or "Don't have that". No opposition apparently could be made o his decisions. Kringelein squinted at the tickets with th prices attached to each article. He thought of nothing but th prices, but he did not venture to ask. Finally, though, he asked, and then he received such an immeasurable shock that ne wanted to run from the place. The fitting-room became a prison cell with four grim warders and looking-glass walls. He ell into a frightful perspiration in spite of having had his voollen coverings removed. They lay in a heap on a chair and ooked utterly cast off and repellent. They had suddenly become strange to him. Those darned, fusty and discoloured articles of clothing nauseated him. And then something happened to him. He fell in love with the silk shirt he was being compelled to put on.

"Ah," said Kringelein, standing with his head on one side and his mouth open as though he were listening to a secret, "ah-ah." The tastefully patterned silk of the shirt caressed his skin. The collar fitted, it did not chafe nor scratch, it was neither too tight nor too loose, and a tie fell smoothly and softly over his breast, beneath which his heart beat in secret ubilation. It beat hard and somewhat painfully, but all the same with relief. Now socks and shoes were put before him, most obligingly, for Gaigern had explained in a few words that he gentleman was not very well and so all that a man of fashion required was collected from all four floors of the establishment. Kringelein was put to the last extremities of shame by his feet. It was as though all the misery and oppression of his life were to be seen in these feet with their swollen soles. And so he crept away with the new socks and shoes into a corner, and bending down with his back to the company he set to work clumsily tugging at the shoelaces. After this he was rigged up in a suit which the Baron had selected.

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possessing, and for the first time he experienced the giddy exhilaration that comes of spending money. He broke down the walls behind which he had lived for a lifetime. He bought and bought. He did not ask the price, but simply bought. He stroked stuffs and silks, felt the brim of hats, sampled waist-coats and belts, matched one colour against another and appreciated their harmonies with the relish of a connoisseur.

"The gentleman has wonderfully good taste," said one.

"Most distinguished," said another. "Most appropriate and correct."

Gaigern stood by, impatient to be off, and added his praises. From sheer boredom he looked at his hands. There was a cut on the right and the left looked naked after giving away his signet ring. Surreptitiously he passed them in front of his face to see whether any scent from the night clung to them, a bitter sweet scent of danger and calm, *neuwjada*, the little flower that grows among the fields.

Kringelein bought a brown lounge suit of rough English tweed, a pair of dark grey trousers with a fine white stripe to go with an elegant morning coat; he bought a dinner jacket and trousers, which only needed the position of a button or two altered; he bought underclothing, shirts, collars, socks, ties, a coat such as Gaigern wore, a soft and astonishingly light hat, bearing the trade mark in gold of a Florence firm, and finally, carrying in his hands a pair of wash-leather gloves just like Gaigern's, he repaired to the pay-desk. There things went smoothly. Kringelein was quickly at home when he encountered the familiar jargon of ledgers and the atmosphere of the counting-house. He paid a thousand marks down, the rest to follow in three instalments. "There we are then," said Gaigern with relief. An array of politely supple backs escorted the transformed and enchanted Kringelein to the mirrored door of the establishment. Outside, it was sunny but cold. The air was like iced wine, Kringelein observed in passing. Hitherto he had always crept about. Now he stepped out. He had three steps to go from the entrance of this fashionable emporium to the grey-blue four-seater and three times he raised his new-shod feet from the pavement with a vigorous and elastic step.

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"A little way out, to have lunch, along the Avus," Gaigern answered unconcernedly.

The street raced to meet the car with ever-increasing swiftness. They drew near the wireless tower, the Funkturm. Kringelein had been there the evening before with Doctor Otternschlag when night was closing in. He had been tired out by then and incapable of grasping anything. The remarkably smooth surfaces of the new and only half finished pavilions out in this neighbourhood had pursued him in his dreams and now reality and dream lay imposed one on the other, half menacing and half incomprehensible.

"Are they going to finish building that?" Kringelein shouted and pointed to the exhibition buildings.

"It is finished," was the answer. Kringelein marvelled. It was all bare like a manufactory, but it did not look ugly like the factory at Fredersdorf.

"An odd city," he said shaking his head and blinked the harder. He felt a shock that contracted the skin of his scalp, but it portended nothing. Gaigern had merely stopped at the north gate of the Avus and now he was already off again.

"Now we can let it rip," he said, and, before Kringelein understood what he meant, he had done so.

At first the wind grew colder and colder, and blew harder and harder, until at last it beat like a fist against his face. The engine sang on a rising note and at the same time something ghastly occurred to Kringelein's legs. They were filled with air. Bubbles rose in his joints as if they would burst. For several seconds, that seemed to last an incredible time, he could not breathe, and moment after moment he thought, Now I'm dying. This is what it's like then. I am dying.

His chest caved in and he gasped for breath. The car swallowed up one object after another before it could be recognized, streaks of red, green and blue. A patch of red just became a car before it vanished into nothingness behind, and all the while Kringelein could not breathe. He felt now an unimagined sensation in his diaphragm. He tried to turn his head towards Gaigern. Strange to say he succeeded without finding it torn from his shoulders. Gaigern sat a little forward

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boats rock at their moorings. He had to think out the experience he had been through. What is speed? he thought. It can't be seen or taken hold of, and, if it can be measured, that too is probably only a trick. How is it then that it goes through and through you, and is even more beautiful than music? Everything was still revolving in circles around him, but this was just what pleased him. He had the bottle of Hundt's Elixir on him, but he did not take any of it.

"I must offer you my heartiest thanks for this wonderful drive," he said studiously, expressing himself in a manner he considered fitting to the circles in which he now moved. Gaigern—who had chosen very plain fare, an egg on spinach—made light of the obligation. "It amused me," he said. "It was your first experience and it's so seldom you find anyone who experiences something for the first time."

"But you do not give one the impression of being blasé yourself, if I may say so," Kringelein replied very aptly. He was quite at home in his new clothes and in his silk shirt. He sat and he ate in a different manner, and his thin hands emerging from the cuffs of his shirt gave him particular satisfaction. They had been manicured that morning by a pretty girl in the hotel basement.

"Good Lord! I, blasé!" Gaigern said delightedly. "No, certainly not. Only, a man like me has a full life." He had to smile. "Though you're right. There are things that even a man like me experiences for the first time—funny things," he added to himself. He clenched his fine teeth softly together and thought of Grusinskaya. He was devoured by impatience for the moment when he should have her in his arms again with all her tender need of him and hear again the sad twittering notes of her bird-like voice. The hours till then were a desert. He gave himself three days, inwardly fretting with impatience, in which to raise the few thousand marks that would keep his associates quiet and enable him to set off for Vienna. In the meanwhile he paid every attention to Kringelein and hoped that things would take a favourable turn.

"What is the next item on the programme?" asked Kringe-

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"Oh, the Avus," replied Kringelein, "and at the same pace," he added lightly.

"Ah, you have pluck then?" said Gaigern and accelerated.

"Yes, I have," said Kringelein, leaning forward with taut muscles, ready with parted lips to enjoy life to the full.

Kringelein stood leaning against the white and red rails of the aerodrome, trying to get the hang of this astounding world which had come round him since the morning. Yesterday—it seemed a hundred years ago—yesterday he had ascended in the lift, stupidly as though in a dream, to the restaurant of the Funkturm; there had been no pleasure in it and Doctor Otternschlag's pessimistic comments made it all even more unreal and ghastly. The day before yesterday—and that seemed a thousand years ago—he was junior clerk in the counting-house of the Saxonia Cotton Company at Fredersdorf, a little miserable employee among three hundred other miserable employees, in a grey worsted suit, who had been given sick-leave on a mere pittance. Today, now and here, he was waiting for a pilot to take him up on a long special flight at a price correspondingly high. It was one of those thoughts that you could not see to the end of, though Kringelein's mind was alert and collected as it had never been before.

It was quite untrue that he had pluck. The pleasure tha confronted him threw him into a perfect panic. He did no want to fly. He did not want to in the least. He would hav liked to go home, home—not to Fredersdorf, but home all th same to his room, No 70, with the mahogany furniture an the down quilt of silk. He wanted to lie in bed and not to hav to fly.

When Kringelein set out to seek life, something misty an formless hovered before his eyes, something at the same tim well upholstered and filled out, with plenty of draperies an fringes and a profusion of ornaments, soft beds, heaped plate voluptuous women, both in painted effigy and real life. No that he was really seeing life, now that he began, as it seeme to be in the middle of it, it had quite another aspect. It mac demands upon him, and a keen wind whistled about his ear and he had to break through walls of anguish and dang

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whirling propellers. The aerodrome was so very large and so wonderfully still, and all the men there were slim and bronzed, happy and silent, and they wore white flying costumes with close-fitting caps. Only the machines had voices as they trundled over the ground barking hoarsely like great dogs.

Gaigern approached with the pilot, a decent fellow with the bow legs of an ex-cavalry officer. Gaigern appeared to be in his element out here. He was hail-fellow-well-met with everybody.

"We're getting off at once," Gaigern announced.

Kringelein, who had some experience of what Gaigern meant by 'getting off', was horribly alarmed. Help, he thought. Help! I'm not going to fly—but he would not for the world have said it aloud. "Oh, are we pushing off?" he asked, like a man of the world. He was proud of the expression 'pushing off', which he used for the first time in his life.

The next thing was that Otto Kringelein sat strapped in the little cockpit in a comfortable leather seat and 'pushed off' into the grey-blue of the March sky. Next to him sat Gaigern whistling softly and that was some consolation in a moment of utter prostration.

At first it was no more than a bumpy ride in a car and then the machine began to make a furious and appalling racket. Suddenly it shook off the earth beneath it and climbed. It did not by any means soar. It was not such a simple business as Kringelein's dream flights on his tenor notes. It sprang up into the air by jumps as though up steps—sprang and sank, sprang and sank. This time the sense of uneasiness was not in his legs as during the motor run at 120 kilometres an hour, but in his head. Kringelein's skull hummed. It became thin. It became quite glassy, and he had to shut his eyes for a moment.

"Air-sick?" asked Gaigern, shouting in his ear, and he wondered whether he could then and there prevail with Kringelein to give him 5000 marks—or only 3000—or even a miserable 1500, with which to pay his hotel bill and buy a ticket for Vienna. "Do you feel bad? Have you had enough?" he added kindly.

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The streets behind the Tempelhof aerodrome went to Kringelein's heart as they drove back. They were so like the dreary streets of Fredersdorf. Chimneys rose up behind railway embankments, and his distended nostrils were on the alert for the smell of size that in Fredersdorf always issued from the finishing shops. As he passed these poor streets, he was more than ever conscious that he wore a new suit and drove in a car. He tried to find a word for this curious mixture of feelings, but he failed. He did not recover his spirits till they reached the Hallescher Gate. There they were held up for half a minute. The flight still ran in his veins like a calm but powerful intoxication, and full of eagerness he asked with a politeness that came from his heart: "And what has the Baron in store for me now?"

"Now—speaking for myself I have to go back to the hotel. I have an engagement at five. But why not come too? I am only going to dance," he added, when he saw the forlorn and dejected look in Kringelein's eloquent eyes.

"Thank you very much, I'll come with pleasure. I can't dance though, unfortunately."

"Oh, rot. Everyone can dance," said Gaigern.

Kringelein reflected upon this remark until they were well into the Friedrichstrasse.

"And after that? What could we do after that?" he asked with importunate insatiability. Gaigern made no reply. He drove on fast till he had to pull up in front of the red traffic signal on the Leipsigerstrasse.

"Tell me, Herr Direktor," he asked while they were at a standstill, "are you married?"

Kringelein made so long a pause for reflection that the traffic signals turned to yellow and green and allowed them to proceed again before he replied.

"Have been. I have been married, Herr Baron. I have separated from my wife. Yes, I have taken my freedom, if I may put it so. There are marriages, Herr Baron, which are so irksome and sickening to both parties that one of the two can't see the other without getting into a rage. The husband can't see his wife's comb in the morning with the combed-out hair

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Kringelein reflected upon this remark until they were well into the Friedrichstrasse.

"And after that? What could we do after that?" he asked with importunate insatiability. Gaigern made no reply. He drove on fast till he had to pull up in front of the red traffic signal on the Leipsigerstrasse.

"Tell me, Herr Direktor," he asked while they were at a standstill, "are you married?"

Kringelein made so long a pause for reflection that the traffic signals turned to yellow and green and allowed them to proceed again before he replied.

"Have been. I have been married, Herr Baron. I have separated from my wife. Yes, I have taken my freedom, if I may put it so. There are marriages, Herr Baron, which are so irksome and sickening to both parties that one of the two can't see the other without getting into a rage. The husband can't see his wife's comb in the morning with the combed-out hair

would also have been glad now to take back some of his unpremeditated confessions.

"So we are going to dance," he said all the more glibly. "I am most extremely obliged to the Herr Baron for taking me under his protection. And what could we do tonight?"

Secretly Kringelein expected a reply that would give expression to unexpressed wishes of his own. He had a hankering after something that was suggested by many pictures in the museum, but a little more tangible, something that the newspapers he read described as an 'orgy'. He supposed that men about town had the key to such things. The evening before Doctor Otternschlag had acceded to his obscurely expressed inclination for the fair sex by taking him to see the ballet and Grusinskaya. Well, that, so Kringelein thought, had been a mistake. Very pretty to look at, but too poetical. Very stirring and magnificent, but it sent you off in a doze and finally it brought on pains in the stomach. Today, however——

"The best thing you could go to tonight is the great boxing match in the Sporthalle," said Gaigern. "We'll see if the Hall Porter has a ticket left."

"Boxing does not interest me in the least," said Kringelein with the superior air of a reader of *Kosmos*.

"Doesn't interest you? Have you ever seen a fight? Well, just go and see one and you'll be interested quick enough," Gaigern promised him.

"Will you come too, Herr Baron?" Kringelein asked quickly. He felt in splendid form after the drive and the flight, alert and vigorous and ready for anything, but he knew he would collapse like a blown-up indiarubber doll the moment the Baron deserted him.

"I'd go like a shot," Gaigern answered, "but unfortunately I can't. I haven't any money."

Meanwhile they had passed the budding trees of the Tiergarten and the hotel front was already in view farther down the street. Gaigern slowed down to twelve kilometres to give Herr Kringelein time to express himself. Kringelein was utterly taken aback by Gaigern's laughing remark. They had stopped

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get on his nerves to have this odd little man tied round his neck.

"Was the Herr Baron playing a joke on me or is it true that the Herr Baron is embarrassed for money?" Kringelein asked hurriedly. It was one of the most difficult things he had ever had to say and he made a mess of it in spite of all his careful preparation.

"The absolute truth, Herr Direktor. I am down and out. The luck's against me, I have only twenty-two marks thirty in my pocket and tomorrow I shall have to hang myself in the Tiergarten," said Gaigern and laughed all over his handsome face. "But the worst is that within three days I have to be in Vienna. I have fallen in love, I may tell you. I am gone on a woman to a degree that no words can describe and it is an imperative necessity to follow her. And not a penny to bless myself with. If only somebody would tip me up enough to gamble with tonight——"

"I want to gamble too," said Kringelein quickly and from the bottom of his heart. The hundred and twenty kilometres an hour feeling and the flying feeling came over him again.

"*Tiens!* Then I'll pick you up at the Sporthalle and we'll go to a nice club I know of. You stake a thousand and I'll stake twenty-two," said Gaigern, and with that he shut his door and left Kringelein standing outside. For the moment he had had enough of him. He threw himself on his bed in his clothes and shut his eyes. He had a listless and bored feeling. He tried to recall the girl with the lock of blonde hair on her forehead, but without success. Something else always came between. Either it was Grusinskaya's bedside lamp, or the balcony railing, or a bit of the Avus, a bit of the aerodrome, or Kringelein's torn braces. Too little sleep last night, he thought, chafing and fretting. He fell into a three-minute sleep, an abyss of healing darkness, as he had learnt to do in the war. He was awakened by a chambermaid knocking at the door. She had a note for him, and it was from Kringelein.

My Dear Baron [wrote Kringelein]. Would you permit the undersigned to regard you as his guest, and at the same

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Preysing remained standing in the unlighted box, and it was only now that he thought of switching on the small light. What's this? he thought in astonishment. What's this about going to Manchester? What put that into my head? But it's true enough—I must go to Manchester. I've fixed the matter here, and I'll fix it there too. Quite simple, he thought, and a new self-confidence entered into him and blew him up like a balloon. This one little successful excursion into deceit had changed a solid, conscientious business man into an intoxicated gambler and speculator, whose jerry-built foundations threatened every moment to collapse.

"*Nine marks twenty for the call,*" *said the operator.*

"Put it on the bill," replied Preysing. He was again lost in thought. "I ought to ring up Mulle," he said to himself; but he did nothing of the sort. He felt a strange disinclination to talk to Mulle. It was a little too warm there in the dining-room at home. Mulle liked over-heated rooms; it seemed to Preysing that he could smell the cauliflower in the dining-room at Fredersdorf; it seemed to him that he could see the folds of her cushion, printed in red on Mulle's round plump cheeks, as she woke from her afternoon nap to take hold of the telephone. He let it go. He did not ring her up. He left the telephone box and went back to the dining-room, where a well-trained waiter had, meanwhile, put his wine in fresh ice and now set freshly warmed plates before him.

Preysing ate, drank his bottle of wine, lit his cigar and then went with hot head and cold feet up to his room. He felt surprised at himself in a pleasant and nebulous way, but he was, at the same time, quite done up by the morning's transactions. The thought of a hot bath was tempting and he turned on the water. Just as he began to undress, it occurred to him that a

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hair. Yes, he became so deeply absorbed in the contemplation of this photograph in a magazine, that it quite upset him when he senior assistant returned from his meal and made ready to shave him.

Nevertheless, the photograph which so captivated him was nothing out of the common. Photographs of this description were to be found by the hundred in periodicals that were not in Preysing's line. The picture was of a naked girl standing on her toes and endeavouring to look over a screen that was too high for her to see over. Her arms were raised and, in this attitude, her extremely pretty breasts were shown to particular advantage. The muscles of her long and slender back were also visible. Her waist was incredibly slender and this slenderness was carried on in her hips until, widening, they swept in two long soft curves to her thighs. Here the body was given a slight turn to the front, so that you could just see her shadowy bosom, her thighs and knees as she stood straining upwards in eager curiosity. This exceptionally well-favoured and charming girl also had a face, and—here lay the extreme provocation of this particular picture—this face was known to the General Director. It was Flämmchen's short-nosed, gay and innocent kitten face, and the smile, too, was the confiding smile of Flamm the Second. It was the same lock of hair, with a high light cunningly thrown on it by the clever photographer, and above all it was her complete spontaneity and her matter-of-course unconcern, as she displayed her figure, stark naked before all the world, the figure that—as Preysing now remembered—she had accurately and modestly described as 'good'. Preysing went red as he held this picture before his eyes; a sudden hot flush sprang to his forehead and clouded his mind, as often occurred in those fits of rage at which the whole factory trembled. Then every vein in his body began to throb singly. He felt it; he felt his blood surge, and he had *not* felt this for years.

Preysing was fifty-four. Not an old man, but a man who had gone to sleep, the passive husband of a Mulle who had gone to seed, the amiable Pops of grown-up daughters. He had walked unmoved behind Flamm the Second along the hotel corri-

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In the hotel, the absence of the moustache was spotted at once, without the least notice being taken of it. They were well accustomed enough, heaven knows, to the most strange transformations in provincial personages after a brief stay in a big hotel. Preysing, breathing hard, made a hasty inquiry for letters. One from Mulle was thrust into his hand. He put it, unread and unregarded, in his pocket and went straight across to the telephone boxes. I must ring up Mulle, he thought. But that will do later. He went into the local-calls box, and, ringing up the office of Justizrat Zinnowitz, had a brief conversation with Flamm the First.

He asked whether her sister happened to be at the office.

No, she had gone.

Where could she be found?

Flamm the First, after a moment's pause, said that perhaps she had got delayed. But she would certainly be at the hotel any moment now.

Preysing gaped like a fool into the telephone. At the hotel? Here? In the Grand Hotel? How was that?

Yes, said Flamm the First, discreetly choosing her words. So at least she had understood. Flämmchen was going to the hotel, and, as far as she knew, it was to take down some letter. But possibly, it may have been an engagement of another description. You could never be sure with Flämmchen. She had her ways and they were by no means the ways of Flamm the First, she inferred. But punctual she certainly was; when she undertook anything, she went through with it, and it was positive that she was going to the hotel.

Preysing thanked her and rang off in conclusion. He dashed back with a harassed air, straight across the Lounge to the porter's desk. The beat of the music could be heard clearly from the Yellow Pavilion.

"Has my secretary inquired for me?" he asked Herr Senf. The Hall Porter looked up at him. His care-worn face showed that he was at a loss.

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else, so that only a head or an arm or a leg was visible at one time—as in a certain kind of modern painting which Preysing detested for its perversity. But the chief and most remarkable features of the Yellow Pavilion was the music. It was produced with incredible gusto by seven gentlemen in white shirts and short trousers, the famous Eastman Jazz Band, and its vivacity was frantic. It drummed on the soles of the feet and tickled the muscles of the lips. There were two saxophones that could weep, and two others derisively mocking their tears. The music sawed, snapped, stood on its head, laid eggs of melody, cackled and proudly jumped on them—and whoever got within range of this music fell into the zig-zag rhythm of the room as if bewitched. Preysing, in any case, who—pushed to and fro by waiters with trays of ices—remained standing by the door, observed a certain springiness in his knee joints while at the same time he kept an impatient look-out for Flamm the Second. His shorn and rejuvenated upper lip was once more beaded with perspiration. He took out his handkerchief and wiped his face, and then put back his handkerchief in his outside breast pocket, usually reserved exclusively for his fountain pen. He even, with an embarrassed side glance, pulled up a corner of it to make a neat little white triangle in the approved style, as though he thereby established his right to be present in these gay regions of the Grand Hotel. In any case, no one bothered about him. He was at liberty to stand there as long as he liked, while he sought among the dancers for one slender young girl in particular, among the two hundred other slender young girls.

"When you weren't there at ten minutes past five, I thought He's let you down. You'll see he's let you down, I thought to myself," said Flämmchen, who was dancing with Gaigern an indolent variation of the Charleston, something new, with a syncopating jerk of the knees. Their two bodies moved like one.

"Out of the question. I've been thinking of you all day," said Gaigern. He said it as lightly and indolently and casually as he danced. He was only an inch or so taller than Flämmchen and he looked down into her kittenish eyes with a smile. She wore

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out stirring from the spot. Gaigern tried to get her away from the middle of the room to the table where he had left Kringelein. But the music began again as they were half way through the crowd. "Tango," Flämmchen cried in an ecstasy and she simply took possession of him. The way she stretched out her hands for his both beseeched and implied his consent. Without a pause they fell into the slow languishing tango-step and room was made for them on all sides when it was seen how beautifully they danced. "You dance very well," Flämmchen whispered. It was almost a declaration of love. Gaigern had nothing to say in reply.

"You were quite different yesterday," Flämmchen said a little later.

"Yes—yesterday," Gaigern answered. It sounded as though he said 'a hundred years ago'. "Something has happened to me between yesterday and today," he added. There was a sympathy between Flämmchen and him of the easiest and most spontaneous kind, and suddenly he obeyed his impulse to tell her all about it.

"I fell in love last night, really and utterly, I mean," he said in a low voice in the midst of the tango as it sobbed and sawed and sung, and filled the whole room. "That makes everything different. It goes through and through you. It is like——"

"But there is nothing extraordinary in that," said Flämmchen mockingly to conceal a stab of disappointment.

"Yes, yes, it *is* something extraordinary. You want to get out of your skin and become another person, you see. You find of a sudden that there's only one woman in the world and everything else is nothing. You find you can never sleep again except with this woman. You're carried off in a whirlwind—as though you had been rammed into a great gun and shot off up the moon or somewhere where nothing is the same."

"What does she look like?" asked Flämmchen, and every other woman in the world would have asked the same question.

"Ah—what does she look like? That's just it. She is very old, and so thin and so light that I could lift her up with one finger. She has wrinkles—here and there, and eyes tired with weeping, and she talks in a jargon like a clown till you have to

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"Yes, yes, it *is* something extraordinary. You want to get out of your skin and become another person, you see. You find of a sudden that there's only one woman in the world and everything else is nothing. You find you can never sleep again except with this woman. You're carried off in a whirlwind—as though you had been rammed into a great gun and shot off up the moon or somewhere where nothing is the same."

"What does she look like?" asked Flämmchen, and every other woman in the world would have asked the same question.

"Ah—what does she look like? That's just it. She is very old, and so thin and so light that I could lift her up with one finger. She has wrinkles—here and there, and eyes tired with weeping, and she talks in a jargon like a clown till you have to

"Good afternoon, Herr Preysing," said Kringelein, all of a sudden, without stirring from his seat. Each single one of his vertebræ ached from the fearful exertion it cost him not to tremble and collapse into the pitiful Kringelein of the counting-house. He held his shoulders rigid, his lips and teeth too, and even his nostrils, and these in consequence dilated with a malicious and equine expression. But he sustained himself on the height of this great moment; his will-power tapped undreamt sources of strength in his well-cut black jacket, his linen, his tie and his manicured fingernails. What certainly went very near to throwing him off his balance was the fact that Preysing too was altered. He still wore his well-known Fredersdorf suit, but he had no longer a moustache.

"I am not sure—pardon me—have we met before?" Preysing asked as politely as his intense preoccupation over Flämmchen allowed.

"To be sure. I'm Kringelein," said Kringelein. "I am in the works."

"I see," said Preysing more coolly. "Kringelein, Kringelein. One of our representatives, are you?" he added with a glance at Kringelein's smart attire.

"No. Book-keeper. Junior book-keeper in the counting-house. Room 23. Block C. Third floor," said Kringelein conscientiously but without enthusiasm.

"I see—" said Preysing again and sank into reflection. He preferred to say no more for the present about the undesired and incomprehensible presence of a junior clerk from Fredersdorf in the Yellow Pavilion of the Grand Hotel. "I want to speak to you, Fräulein Flamm," he said, withdrawing his hand from the back of her chair. "It is about a new job of typing," he explained in his office tone, and this was particularly aimed at this fellow from Fredersdorf.

"Right," said Flämmchen. "What time would suit you, then? Seven, half past seven?"

"No. Immediately," Preysing said peremptorily, as he wiped his face. This personage from Fredersdorf also had a handkerchief in his breast pocket, a silk flag of mutiny and impertinence.

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"Now, now, now," said Flämmchen. "This is not the place squabble in. You're here to dance. And don't look at your et, but at my face, and just walk, just walk straight ahead, id I'll guide you."

"If that's not a case of peculation——" Preysing blurted it, trembling with rage.

Gaigern continued to smoke. The word aroused in him an ld feeling of professional sympathy, and with it a strong and ontemptuous dislike of the corpulent and perspiring director. ou need a few leeches applied to you, my friend, he thought himself.

"Let the poor devil have his fun," he said half aloud. "You in see he's not long for this world."

I didn't ask for your advice, thought Preysing; but he did ot venture to say it, for he suspected that he would meet more ian his match in the Baron. "Would you be so good as to iform Fräulein Flamm that I am waiting for her in the ounge on a matter of urgent importance. If she does not come y six o'clock, I shall not require her services," he said, bowed iffly and retired.

Alarmed by this ultimatum, Flämmchen appeared in the ounge at three minutes to six. Preysing, who had been sitting n hot bricks, got up with a smile of heart-felt relief. He smiled seldom, that it came as an engaging surprise.

"There you are——" he said foolishly.

For hours he had been possessed and tormented by one ngle thought—was Flämmchen to be had? His experiences ith women had been few and long since closed. He had only ie vaguest notions about the girls of the younger generation iough at bachelor parties, and in the course of comfortable ilks on his business journeys, he had often heard it said that iey made very little of entering on temporary liaisons. He ioked Flämmchen up and down from her crossed legs in silk ockings to her cut-glass beads and her painted mouth (she

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The murmur of the spectators abruptly ceased and turned to rapt attention. Hit followed hit. Shouts from the gallery—then silence. Another hit. The first blood trickled down over the eyes of one of the two—and he laughed. Hit, hit and now and then a pant. Kringelein came upon his clenched fists in his coat pockets. They seemed to him like two hard inanimate objects he had found there. Gong. Again the corners of the ring were a turmoil of flapping handkerchiefs and tapping and massaging hands. The bodies of the two now shone with sweat. Below, every face showed cold and green in the hard light and men were standing up and engaging in excited debate.

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"There, you are quite played out with enthusiasm," Gaigern said to him. "You get carried away with it, eh?"

Kringelein remembered an evening he had spent a thousand years before.

"It's something different to yesterday evening at Grusinskaya's ballet," he answered, and he thought with pity and distaste of the empty theatre, of the ghostly and sadly circling nymphs, of the wounded dove in the moonlight and of the feeble applause accompanied by Otternschlag's comments.

"Grusinskaya!" said Gaigern. "Well, yes, that's quite another affair." He began smiling to himself. "There's too much *chi chi* with Grusinskaya," he went on. He could see her at that moment. He could actually see her in her dressing-room at Prague, resting and thinking how tired the night before had made her, how tired, but how young, how full of courage!

"This fight was not up to much. The real event comes on now," he said to Kringelein. Kringelein was glad to hear it. He thought himself that there must be more to come—the thud of heavier blows, louder panting, and even more frenzied participation. More, he thought. More. More. On with it! On with it!

Two gigantic forms stepped into the ring, a white man and a nigger. The nigger was tall and slim with a velvety skin from which the light was reflected in gleams of silver. The white man was thick set. The muscles stood out in his shoulders and he had a square brutish face. Kringelein loved the nigger at once. The whole hall loved the nigger. The megaphone announced the fight and an incredible silence followed. And then it all began again as before. There was the same initial play and the nimble footwork, the jumps, the stealthy approach with lowered head and the elastic jump back. When

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On they went. Past the Gedächtniskirche, whose walls wer white in the light of the thousand lights all round, and wher the cars threw gleaming reflections on the oily asphalt. Every body looked black in the brilliance of the illuminated sho windows of the Tautentzienstrasse. Then abruptly came th silence and darkness under the trees of the Bavarian quarte Little squares started out of the darkness, with gravel an hedges and lamps. Still they went on, until finally they reache the gambling club.

It occupied the large rooms of an old-fashioned Berli house which had been re-fitted as a club. Men in dinner jacket moved noiselessly about. There were many coats in the tile cloakroom. Kringelein recognized a pale, lean figure, smartl clothed in black, who was smoothing his thin hair off his fore head, as himself. It came as a surprise to encounter himself i the glass. I can really stand a good deal, he thought. For th space of a second he thought of his friend, Kampmann, th solicitor. It seemed as though he had known him in a drean

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dead-and-alive Fredersdorf existence. He knew that in this obscure room with the laconic men and the green table he could only let himself be whirled on as before and so gamble away the three or four weeks of vagabond life that remained. And Kringelein, in this new form of looping the loop, was almost curious to know what would happen next. On, then—on!

His ears and his lips had gone white as he stepped up to the table and began to play. His hands felt as though they were full of sand. He staked. A little shovel appeared and took up his green counter with the rest. Someone said something that he did not understand. He put down another, this time somewhere else. He lost. Another. He lost again. Gaigern across the table staked something, won once, then lost again. Kringelein threw a quick imploring glance across, but it was not observed. Here everyone was concerned with himself alone. Every eye was riveted on the green surface of the table. Each man bent all his force and will to draw the winnings to himself. "No luck," someone said somewhere. It was an ominous word to hear in this brown back room beneath the green billiard-room lamp. Kringelein, utterly preoccupied with himself alone, went to the lady in black and drew counters for another five hundred marks. He returned to the table. Another man was now shovelling up the counters. They made a gentle rattling sound. Restless fingers arranged them meticulously in little piles. Kringelein took his store in his left hand and staked with his right hand at random and almost unconsciously. He staked and lost. Staked and won. What a surprise when his green counter returned to him, accompanied by a red one! He staked and won. He put a few counters in his pocket because he did not know what else to do with them. He staked and lost thrice in succession. He left off for a few minutes. Gaigern, too, had ceased to play. He stood with his hands in his pockets and smoked. "Finished for today," he said. "My money's gone." "Allow me, Herr Baron," Kringelein whispered and thrust one of the two red counters he still possessed into Gaigern's hand, which trembled as he took it out of his pocket. "I'm too flat for play tonight," Gaigern muttered. He had a keen nose

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On and on. It was raining now. The screen-wiper made its half circular sweeps, and Kringelein watched it going to and fro, to and fro. The smell of the petrol now made him feel at home in a warm little home of his own. Long streaks of red and blue and yellow were reflected in the wet surface of the street. A glaring jet of flame burning on persistently in the dead of night threw up in black relief a gang of workmen soldering a rail. The car went much too slowly to please Kringelein. He gave Gaigern a side glance. Gaigern was smoking, his eyes on the road, his thoughts heaven knew where. The town at half past one at night looked as though some accident had occurred. It was completely alert and crowded with people, almost more crowded than by day. At the crossings, where now no police were on duty, there was a continuous warning hoot of cars. Above, a red and fiery sky rested like a portent of disaster, traversed at regular intervals by jerking shafts of light from the searchlights of the Funkturm. On they went.

A staircase filled with the noise of music from three floors. Flags and paper snakes below, half way up blind mirrors in gilt stucco frames, a medley of people, some drunk, some melancholy, cadaverous girls dark under the eyes. Kringelein forced his way upstairs past their powdered backs. The whole place was full of cigarette smoke. It hung in thick blue clouds round the paper shades that gave an up-to-date air to the electric light fittings on the staircase. Below the noise was loud and uproarious. On the first floor a less disorderly music issued from folding doors within which dancing was in progress. One floor up again and there was silence. A girl in virulent green stockings was sitting on the stairs with a glass in her hand and pretending to be asleep as they passed by. Her bare shoulders brushed Kringelein's new clothes and awoke him to expectancy. They entered a long, almost dark room. Only on the floor a few lanterns with paper shades that shone opaquely. There was music here too, but you could not see where it came from. Girls' legs were to be seen dancing in the light of the lanterns, distinctly seen as far as the knee but beyond all was swallowed in darkness. Kringelein wanted to

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became motionless, listening intently to himself. For one dreaming moment's space he had his hands full of ripe red juicy raspberries from Michenau Forest—and then something came swiftly nearer, something frightful, like a sword and a flash of lightning and a wing of flame.

Suddenly Gaigern heard him groan. It was a piercing and incredible sound, full of dread and tortured humanity.

"What's the matter?" Gaigern asked in the utmost alarm.

"Oh—pains," came the answer, wrung from the darkness near Kringelein's face. Gaigern picked up one of the lanterns and put it on the table. There sat Kringelein rigid and upright on the upholstered seat with his two hands clasped like the links of a chain. The lamp was blue and it made Kringelein's face blue, with a great round black mouth from which groans issued. Gaigern knew this mask of pain from severely wounded cases in the war. He quickly put an arm under Kringelein's head and, like a good comrade, supported his heaving shoulders.

"Dead drunk?" asked the girl. She was very young still and very common in her dress of black sequins.

"Be quiet," Gaigern answered.

Kringelein raised his eyes to him, tortured and torn with pain. He forced himself to a piteous and heroic attempt at good form. "Now it's I who am 'groggy'," he said with his blue lips, and he meant his dazed, almost unconscious, fought-out and collapsing condition. It was a lame but courageous joke that broke in the middle and ended in groans.

"But what's up with you?" asked Gaigern in alarm.

And Kringelein replied almost inaudibly: "I think—I've got —to die——"

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walls has his secrets; even the lady with the expressionless face in Room No 28, who is always humming, and the gentleman in Room No 154 who gargles so frantically and is only a commercial traveller. Even Pageboy No 10 has a secret of his own behind his sleekly brushed forehead—an oppressive and horrible secret lies on his conscience. For he has found a gold cigarette case that Baron Gaigern left in the Winter Gardens, and has not given it up. For fear that it would be found on him when he went off duty, he has left it, for the present, stuffed in between the seat and the back of an easy chair, and in his seventeen-year-old soul Morality and the Rights of the Proletariat wage a bitter war.

Senf, the Hall Porter, has his eye on the boy—Karl Nispe is his name when he is not merely a number—for he slouches about the entrances with a distracted air and black rings under his eyes. But Senf, too, has other things to think about. His wife has now been for days in the hospital. There can be no question now of a normal delivery. The pains have stopped and strange cramps have set in, but the baby's heart can still be heard beating, and they await the moment for expediting the birth by artificial means. Senf has been out at midday but he was not allowed to see her. She was lying in a drowsed state of exhaustion which the doctors termed sleep. This is how it is with the Hall Porter, Senf, as he carries on in his mahogany cage, occupied now with the board where the keys hang and now with the railway timetables. Rohna has offered him a few days off, but he does not want time off. He is glad to be in harness and not to have to think. As for Rohna himself, this highly competent Count Rohna, who puts in fourteen hours' work a day, he is a fine fellow, but a hopeless outcast from his own class, and what he thinks about it nobody knows. Perhaps he is proud of his position, perhaps he is ashamed whenever a man of his own class registers his name. His bright and narrow and fair-complexioned face betrays nothing. It has become nothing but a mask.

At two o'clock in the morning seven utterly exhausted, limp and dejected persons, carrying black cases, left the Grand Hotel by Entrance No II. They were the members of the

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"The keys of 69 and 70," Gaigern said in a low voice. "My riend is in a bad way. A doctor, the sooner the better." He upported Kringelein with one hand and took the keys in the other and then propelled Kringelein towards the lift.

"I am a doctor. Hot milk at once to No 70," Doctor Otternschlag said suddenly in a surprisingly alert tone of voice to the night porter, and then he followed the others without more ado.

"I'll look after Kringelein," he said to Gaigern as they were being taken up. "Don't worry, Herr Kringelein, it's over now."

Kringelein, who did not understand what he meant, stopped groaning and sank in a heap on the lift bench, clutching himself in agony. "Over already," he whispered with resignation. 'So soon over? It's only just begun."

"You've gone at it too fast. Everything at once is too much," said Otternschlag. He bore Kringelein a grudge on many grounds, but he held his hand all the same and felt his pulse.

"Nonsense, Kringelein. It's not over yet! You've drunk too much iced champagne, that's all," Gaigern said to cheer him up. The lift stopped with a jerk and put an end to the misunderstanding. Kringelein's knees gave way when he stood in the corridor, greatly to the alarm of the dejected chambermaid. Gaigern picked him up and carried him to bed. While he got him out of his clothes and buttoned him in his new pyjamas, Otternschlag disappeared with a busied air.

"I'll be back in a moment," he said and went out with his stiff shanks galvanized by a new energy.

When he came back he found Kringelein lying rigidly in his bed with his hands pressed to his thighs like a soldier presenting arms. If he was not moaning that was due only to a supreme effort of will. When he had set out in search of life he had promised himself to die like a man and without making a fuss about it whenever the moment came. It was a debt he felt he owed to some unknown power for the extravagant licence of

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eyes, and it bore him swiftly away. The pain relaxed, and he himself dissolved into a circling cloud. "There, you see——" he still heard the Doctor say, while everything became a matter of indifference and the fear of death retreated like a black beast.

"There we are," said Otternschlag, and after a moment he laid Kringelein's head down on the quilt. "He's at peace for the time."

Gaigern, who meanwhile had put Kringelein's new clothes in order, came up now to the brass bedstead and observed the short faint breathing beneath the bright blue pyjamas.

"For the time?" he asked in a whisper. "Will nothing—happen? Isn't it dangerous?"

"No, our friend will have to jog along for a bit yet. He has many a caper like this to go through before he is left in peace. His heart, you see, his heart's all there. It's still alive and kicking, and it won't shut up shop yet. It's a machine that's not been much used—Herr Kringelein's heart. A lot has gone to bits round about, but the heart itself insists on its rights. So the marionette must dance on while the last string holds! Cigarette?"

"Thanks," said Gaigern, and absentmindedly took one. Then he sat down beneath the still-life picture of pheasants and thought hard for a minute or two over what Otternschlag had said.

"And so he's really in a bad way? And can't die all the same? Seems a ghastly business," he concluded.

Otternschlag, who had nodded in reply to each question, replied: "Just so. That's it. That's why I value my little trunk so highly. You cannot really put up with all the pain that being on this earth entails unless you know that at any moment you can make an end of it. Life is a miserable sort of existence, believe me."

Gaigern smiled at this. "But—I enjoy life," he said innocently.

Otternschlag turned his surviving eye on him quickly. "Yes, you enjoy life. Your sort enjoys life. I know your sort and I know you——"

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"Well——" said Otternschlag and swallowed somethin down. Kringelein was muttering unintelligibly under hi drooping moustache. "Well—look at me for example," sai Otternschlag. "I am a suicide, you must understand. As a rul you only see suicides after the event—when they have alread turned on the gas or pulled the trigger. I, as I sit here, am suicide before the event. To put it in one word, I am a livin suicide—a rarity, you will agree. One of these days I shall tak ten of these ampoules out of this box and inject them into m veins—and then I shall be a living suicide no longer. I sha march out through the revolving door, figuratively speaking and you can sit on in the Lounge and wait."

Gaigern observed with surprise that this mad doctor Ottern schlag appeared to cherish a kind of hatred of him.

"That may be a matter of taste," he said lightly. "I am no in such a hurry. I have no complaint to make of life. I find i splendid."

"Indeed? You find it splendid? And yet you were in th war. And then you came home, and then you find life splen did? And what, man, have you done about it all? Have yo forgotten it all? There—we won't talk of what it was like ou there. We all know that well enough. But how can you com back after that, and still say you're pleased with life? Wher do you find it—this life of yours? I have looked for life, bu I can't find it. I often think to myself: I'm dead already. shell has torn my head from my shoulders, and I'm sitting a a corpse all the time buried in that dug-out at Rouge Croi There you have the real and actual impression life makes o me ever since I got back."

Something in Otternschlag's impassioned words touche Gaigern. He got up and went over to the bed. Kringelein wa asleep, though his eyes were not quite closed. Gaigern cam back to Otternschlag on tiptoe.

"Yes, there's some truth in that," he said in a low voice. "I wasn't very easy coming back. When a man says 'out there' he means something like 'home'. Nowadays being in German is like being in clothes you've grown out of. We've becom intractable and there's no place for us. What can any of us star

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money?" he persisted obstinately. "All that money? The money I won?"

Gaigern lit a cigarette and inhaled the smoke into his lungs.

"Where is his money?" asked Otternschlag.

"In his pocketbook," said Gaigern.

"In your pocketbook," Otternschlag passed on. "Now go to sleep again. You mustn't get too lively, or it'll do you harm."

"I want my pocketbook here," Kringelein demanded with outspread fingers. He could not express himself clearly in his drugged condition. All that his obscured consciousness was aware of was that he had to pay for every minute of his life in ready money and pay dearly. In his dream he had seen both life and money escaping from him, running away in a rapid and strong stream, like the stream at Fredersdorf which was dry every summer.

Otternschlag sighed and got up. He felt in the pockets of Kringelein's coat which Gaigern had hung over the back of a chair, and found nothing. Gaigern stood at the window smoking with his back to the room and his face turned to the street —now silent in the white light of the arc lamps.

"There's no pocketbook there," said Otternschlag, and let his hands fall to his sides after this immense exertion.

In an instant Kringelein was out of bed, and there he stood in the middle of the room on his thin and tottering legs. His face was aghast and he was breathless.

"Where is my pocketbook?" he cried piteously. "Where is it? Where is all that money? Where, where is it? Where is my pocketbook? Where is my pocketbook?"

Gaigern, who had long ago taken possession of the pocketbook, tried to shut his ears to the plaintive clamour which arose shrilly in spite of the huskiness of sleep. Outside he heard the lift coming up. He heard steps come along the corridor and die away as doors closed upon them. He heard—or so he imagined—someone breathing in Room No 71. He heard his wrist-watch ticking. But he heard Kringelein's terror as well and he hated Kringelein savagely at this moment; he would have liked nothing better than to murder him. He turned impetuously into the room, but the pitiful sight that Kringe-

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disappeared. Everything in him drew to a crisis as he thought of Grusinskaya and felt her light form in his arms and carried her up the steps of her house at Tremezzo. He must go to her, he must, he must. But suddenly he was overcome by the unreasoning and irresistible pity that he had felt for Grusinskaya the day before; and he now felt it for Kringelein sitting there on the edge of the bed. He felt pity too for Otternschlag, for the war-wasted face fixed on his own, and pity, remote and unconscious, for himself, and this pity was his undoing.

He took two steps into the room and smiled. "Here is his pocketbook," he said. "I took charge of it earlier on in case Kringelein had it stolen at the night club."

"There we are then," said Otternschlag, relaxing again. He took the old worn and bulging pocketbook from Gaigern's hands. It gave him a peculiar forlorn feeling of tenderness to do so. It was so seldom he had occasion to touch the hands of another man. He turned his head and fixed the other eye on Gaigern with an expression that might have conveyed either gratitude or a secret understanding. But he started back at the same moment. Instead of Gaigern's particularly handsome and lively face he saw a mask so blanched, drawn, vacant and dead, that he was frightened. Are there nothing but ghosts in this world then? he thought with alarm as he made his way along the sofa to the bed and put down the pocketbook by Kringelein's side.

The whole scene had only taken a few seconds and during this time Kringelein had sat plunged in silent reflection.

Now that Otternschlag handed him the pocketbook over which he had made such a piteous lamentation he barely touched it. He let it fall on to the quilt without counting the money, all that money, the money he had won.

"Please, don't leave me," he said, and he said it, not to Otternschlag who had come to his help, but to Gaigern. He stretched out his arm to Gaigern who stood gloomily by the window smoking a fresh cigarette.

"There's nothing to be afraid of, Kringelein," Otternschlag said meanwhile to comfort him.

"I'm not afraid," replied Kringelein peevishly and with a

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Now that Otternschlag handed him the pocketbook over which he had made such a piteous lamentation he barely touched it. He let it fall on to the quilt without counting the money, all that money, the money he had won.

"Please, don't leave me," he said, and he said it, not to Otternschlag who had come to his help, but to Gaigern. He stretched out his arm to Gaigern who stood gloomily by the window smoking a fresh cigarette.

"There's nothing to be afraid of, Kringelein," Otternschlag said meanwhile to comfort him.

"I'm not afraid," replied Kringelein peevishly and with a

Gaigern. Perhaps he even had a dim notion that Gaigern had meant to rob him; nevertheless, he clung to him tightly.

"Please stay with me," he implored.

At this, Otternschlag in turn began to laugh. He lifted up his mangled face in the cold light of the electric lamp and began to laugh with his wry mouth, but it was not at all like Gaigern's laughter. It was noiseless at first, then with a sort of hissing sound, then louder and louder, more and more scornful and more and more malevolent. Next door in Room No 71, someone knocked three times on the wall. "I must really ask you to be quiet. The night is for sleep, not for playing the fool," was heard in the complaining, sleepy and injured voice of an unknown personage. It was General Director Preysing, who little dreamt that in the next room three lines of fate had met for a fleeting and decisive hour. . . .

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unthinkable remoteness]. Dear Otto, I have had your letter and am quite sure you would ail nothing if you took care of yourself, and father thinks the same. He has made an application for me for support from the factory, but I have not heard yet how the matter stands. They only put me off with promises. I am writing to you, chiefly on account of the stove, for it can't go on like this any longer. Binder was here to look at it. The vent-pipe is blocked, he says, and in every house in the Settlement there is something or other wrong. If they put in stoves like this they ought to supply coals as well, for no one on earth can pay such coal bills as the stove runs up. Now I have talked it over with Binder. He says he cannot repair the pipe for less than fourteen or fifteen marks and that it would pay for doing by the saving of coal. Of course, that is a big expense and I should like to hear without delay what you think we ought to do about the stove. It can't go on as it is, but there is no good, either, in spending fourteen marks on a bad stove. I have talked with Kietzau too, on the sly. He knows something about these things. But he thinks it would cost rather more than less, and he won't guarantee that we should need less coal than before, he says. So I went to the factory and made a row. I got hold of Schriebes after a lot of bother and told him they ought to mend the stove, and it is only right since it is on their property. But they won't hear of it. Schriebes was uncivil, and he is only a common fellow who thinks of nothing but his own pocket. If I can get something now out of the sick fund —father thinks they might fork out thirty marks, but I don't, for Preysing, the old skinflint, lets nothing past him, and am I to have the stove mended, then, or not? Do you get sick pay extra when you are in the sanatorium, or do they take it all? People here are turning nasty and saying that you are shirking work and putting your pay in your pocket. I can't go outside the door, for they don't spare my feelings. Please see to this business with the sick fund at once. Frau Prahm says that as long as you are sick, they can't deduct anything from your money. You must look into it, or you're a fool, she says. Bad weather here. How is it with you?

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with astonishing coolness. "I want a word with you. May I sit down?"

"Please," said Preysing helplessly as Kringelein did so.

"The young lady will please forgive the intrusion," he said next to Flämmchen with address. Flämmchen, with lively amiability, replied:

"We know each other, Herr Kringelein, don't we? We danced a delightful foxtrot together."

"Quite so. We did," said Kringelein, clearing his throat of a slight huskiness. His throat was throbbing. After this there was a silence.

"Well, what is it? I have no time to lose. I have urgent letters to dictate to Fräulein Flämmchen," the General Director finally said in his General Director's tone.

Kringelein, however, showed no sign whatever of collapsing under it, though he did not quite know where to begin.

"It's a letter from my wife. The stove has gone wrong again and the firm refuses to have it repaired. Now that won't do. The settlement, where I live, belongs to the firm and we pay the rent punctually. It's deducted from our wages. Then the firm ought to see that everything is in good order in the houses on its property and none of us ought to suffocate because the stoves are bad." This was how he began. Preysing went a dull red between his eyebrows and had the greatest difficulty in keeping his temper.

"You know very well that these matters are no concern of mine. If you have any complaints to make you must make them to the estate office. It is absolutely unheard of to bother me with anything of this sort."

Full stop. And this might well have concluded what he had to say. But Preysing must needs add: "Instead of you people being thankful to have homes put up for you, you become impudent. It's intolerable."

Though Preysing stood up, Kringelein remained seated.

"Very well, we will leave it at that," he said carelessly. "You think that you can be as insulting as you like. I beg to differ. You think that you are something altogether superior, but you are quite a common man, Herr Preysing, though you may have

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you wrote me a letter saying that I should receive notice if I was sick any longer. Is that so or not—yes or no, Herr Preysing?"

"I can't remember every letter I sign. But, in any case, a factory is not an almshouse, nor a hospital, nor a life insurance agency. You have now reported sick again and here you are living like a lord or an embezzler——"

"You shall withdraw that. You shall withdraw that at once in this lady's presence," Kringelein shouted. "Who are you to presume to insult me? Who do you think you are talking to? Do you think I am dirt? And if I am dirt you are a great deal dirtier, Herr Generaldirektor. So now you know. You are dirt, dirt!"

Both men now stood face to face glaring at each other in a frenzy of rage and slanging each other as hard as they could go. Preysing was flushed a dark red, almost blue, and big drops of perspiration stood on his shaven upper lip. Kringelein was completely yellow. His lips were utterly drained of blood, and his elbows, his shoulders and indeed every limb quivered. Flämmchen looked first at one and then at the other. Her head moved to and fro like a foolish kitten's after a swinging tangle wool. All the same she understood pretty well what Kringelein had it on his mind to say, in spite of his distracted state, and it had her sympathy.

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"What do you know or care how people like us have to exist?" he cried, white-lipped under his light, ruffled moustache. "But the way we live is enough to bring one to despair. It is like climbing up a bare wall. It is like being shut up in a cellar all your life. You wait on from year to year, and first you have a hundred and eighty marks, and, when you have waited five years, then you have two hundred, and then you crawl on and wait again. And then you think: It'll be better later on and later on you'll be able to afford to have a child—but it never gets to that—and then you even have to give up keeping a dog, because money doesn't run to it, and then you wait on in hopes of a rise, working like a nigger and putting in overtime without pay, and then another gets the rise with three hundred and twenty and family allowances, and you're left

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Kringelein had got switched on to a side-track. He poured ɔut all the experiences and all the hatred of twenty-seven years ɔell-mell. He mixed up the important with the trivial, the real vith the imaginary, and office gossip with what he knew at irst hand. This explosion in an hotel bedroom was nothing but he grievance of a sensitive and unsuccessful man against one vho had simply made his way with a certain brutality—a genuine grievance, however unjustifiable and absurd. . . . Preysing, on his side, completely incapable of any sympathetic ınderstanding, fell deeper and deeper into ungovernable rage.

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where he was between the two doors a moment longer and his eyes took in the small hotel suite with a fleeting glance. He saw Flämmchen standing in a ray of sun at the window, the corpulent and sobered General Director with his hands in his pockets and the vista through the open bedroom and bathroom doors. It all trembled indistinctly through the involuntary tears that obscured his eyes and showed his emotional condition. He took up his trampled hat from the floor and made a bow.

"I hope the young lady will forgive the intrusion," he said to Flämmchen once again, in his high-pitched, pleasing voice.

Preysing, with a husband's bad conscience, felt this to be a vulgar and base insinuation. He took his hands from his pockets.

"Get out," was all he said.

But Kringelein had gone already.

Preysing with squeaking tread walked three times up and down the room. His temples throbbed and his forehead was flushed.

"Well?" asked Flämmchen.

Suddenly the General Director ran to the door, pulled it open, and, trumpeting like an angry elephant, shouted down the silent corridor.

"You won't escape. I'll have you watched. We'll see where you stole the money to idle about here on. You Communist—you swindler—you impudent cur. I'll have you locked up—locked up——"

But there was nothing more to be seen or heard of Kringelein.

"After all he was decent enough. He was actually crying at the end," Flämmchen said in conclusion.

That was her only comment on the whole scene. . . .

"Leave your stockings on, though. It looks so pretty," said Preysing. He was sitting on the sofa in Flämmchen's bedroom in Room No 72.

"No," said Flämmchen, "I should feel horrid. I can't be in nothing but shoes and stockings."

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"Different? How do you mean, different?"

"More coquettish. There was something so fetching about it, you know . . ."

Flämmchen understood. She was aware of the hidden disappointment over her cool unapproachability and of the repressions in Preysing's sluggish blood, the stagnation of his conventional nature, but she could do nothing to help him. I am as I am, she thought. "Yes," she said, "photographers always put one in some idiotic pose to be photographed. And then they touch it up as well. Did the photograph please you more than I do myself?"

"What do you think—you're sweet," Preysing replied. His vocabulary of endearment was limited. "But won't you say 'darling' to me? Please, do!"

Flämmchen shook her head emphatically.

"Oh, no," she said.

"No? But why not?"

"Just no. I can't do it. I can't really. You are a stranger to me, so how can I call you 'darling'? In every other way—in every other way, I'll do anything you like. But to call you 'darling' is impossible."

"You're an odd creature, Flämmchen," said Preysing, and he looked at her naked gleaming skin and her painted lips. "You take some knowing."

"Not odd in the least," said Flämmchen with an obstinate pout of the lips. She had her own variety of shyness. "One must think of the future," she tried to explain. "I can go with you to England and all that, but when it's over, it's over; and if I say 'darling', it isn't over. If I meet you in six months' time, I shall say, 'Good day, Herr Generaldirektor.' And you will say, 'That is the little typist I took with me to Manchester.' And that will be all right. But it wouldn't be very pleasant, would it, if I met you with your wife and said, 'Hallo, darling, how goes it?' "

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ack a step or two. She put her hands behind her neck and ooked at him through half closed lids. There were the same ight-coloured wisps of hair under her arms as there were over er forehead. Preysing suddenly felt a choking sensation.

"Will you be kind to me?" he whispered.

"Oh, yes. Gladly," answered Flämmchen, politely ready tc blige. The next moment the General Director threw himsel upon her. In his face there was the expression of a man wh ad burst ropes, broken through walls and escaped from prison. Ie was running away from himself, this correct and conscien- ious and diffident Preysing. He discharged himself like a ocket and landed in Flämmchen's arms. *There!* though Flämmchen, a little taken aback by the anxious and passionate urrender that Preysing's distracted state expressed. She pu er arms round his neck and he felt her warmth break over him n waves in which he let himself drown, while telegraph forms, nnumerable telegraph forms rioted in front of his closed eyes nd became dark red and dark blue and disappeared, as soon s his mouth drank in the taste of violets from Flämmchen's ainted lips.

It was late in the evening. An echo of dance music from he Yellow Pavilion vibrated in a quiver of melody through very wall of the Grand Hotel. The Hall Porter, Senf, had anded over his duties to the night porter more than an hour go. Doctor Otternschlag had gone up to his room and lay with yes shut and mouth open on his bed. He looked like a stupe- ied mummy. His small trunk was packed for departure, but ow, as before, he had not yet summoned up the necessary esolution for this final formality.

In Room No 68 a typewriter rattled on without mercy. The epresentative of an American film company had taken up his quarters there, and on the brass bedstead, which had witnessed Grusinskaya's night of love, strips of celluloid lay in heaps. The American examined them while he cleared off his business etters. The bell of the machine could be heard in Room No 70, vhere Kringelein sat in his bath and watched the antics of a ablet of bath salts on the white enamel. He was sad, and

back a step or two. She put her hands behind her neck and looked at him through half closed lids. There were the same light-coloured wisps of hair under her arms as there were over her forehead. Preysing suddenly felt a choking sensation.

"Will you be kind to me?" he whispered.

"Oh, yes. Gladly," answered Flämmchen, politely ready to oblige. The next moment the General Director threw himself upon her. In his face there was the expression of a man who had burst ropes, broken through walls and escaped from prison. He was running away from himself, this correct and conscientious and diffident Preysing. He discharged himself like a rocket and landed in Flämmchen's arms. There! thought Flämmchen, a little taken aback by the anxious and passionate surrender that Preysing's distracted state expressed. She put her arms round his neck and he felt her warmth break over him in waves in which he let himself drown, while telegraph forms, innumerable telegraph forms rioted in front of his closed eyes and became dark red and dark blue and disappeared, as soon as his mouth drank in the taste of violets from Flämmchen's painted lips.

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He pressed down the handle of the inner door. It was open but the room was empty. The pageboy, Karl, who knew something of life, grinned, whistled once high and softly and put the cigarette case, warm from his hand, on the middle of the table. The room was exceedingly cheerful. The light was on and the air in it was so unusually fragrant and un-hotel-like with menthol, lavender water, cigarettes and the scent of lilac, that it was a pleasure merely to breathe it. One or two sprays of forced white lilac were in a vase. On the writing-table there was a photograph of a sheepdog. In the middle of the room Gaigern's patent-leather shoes were dreaming with a dutiful and self-contented expression. Karl was impressed. He sniffed this atmosphere of bachelor elegance, and grinned. Suddenly with a sharp throb of his heart he took possession of the cigarette case again, stowed it away inside his jacket and under his shirt and went silently out.

A chambermaid was sitting in her little office writing a letter as he passed by the open door. It was very quiet on the second floor. Down below, the miniature propeller of an electric fan was humming. In the Yellow Pavilion a tango was being played.

A faint echo of the music could be detected even in the expensive two-bedded room that General Director Preysing had engaged for his secretary. Preysing emerged from the violet fragrance of his first kiss and said, "Listen!"

"Yes. I heard it a long while. Music," said Flämmchen, "it's nice to hear it in the distance."

"Music? No. Didn't you hear anything else?" Preysing asked. He made a somewhat distraught impression as he sat upright on the edge of the bed and listened. His eyebrows were drawn up on the strain of attention, and his forehead was a complete network of wrinkles—the result of many years of intricate business cares. "I can hear something all the same," he said anxiously.

"What? Where?" Flämmchen murmured. She was getting sleepy and she put her hands impatiently on Preysing's head.

"I heard a knocking of some sort," Preysing pointed and

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where a moment since there had been a streak of light and which now was dark—as dark as the lighted hotel front and the arc lamps and electric signs allowed. As he stood there he was waiting for something extremely unpleasant to happen, though exactly what he did not know. He had a vague idea that that crazy clerk had forced his way in as he had in the morning and that he was in there now. He suspected that this revengeful Kruckelein or Kringelein, or whatever he was called, had caught him in a peccadillo and was now in a position to make himself highly unpleasant by denouncing him or blackmailing him or making a scandal in one way or another——

It was this that rushed in a dark stupor through Preysing's head as he seized the door handle and abruptly opened the door.

The room was in darkness. There was not a sound. There was nobody there. Nobody breathed. But neither did Preysing breathe.

He put a hand out behind him and switched on the light by the door. The next moment the room was dark again. There had been one spasmodic flash of electric light, so brief that he had seen nothing clearly. A second of the most extreme and eerie suspense followed. Preysing's brain worked like mad. There is another switch at the door into the passage, it told him of its own accord. A man is standing there and as soon as I switch on, he switches off.

"Is anyone there?" he said, in a voice unnecessarily loud and so hoarse that he himself was startled by it. No reply. Preysing made a dart forward and found the writing-table, knocking his shin against it most painfully. He turned on the table-lamp. Then he stared with all his eyes.

Near the wardrobe close to the door into the passage stood a man in silk pyjamas. It was not the clerk. It was—Preysing recognized his face in the light of the green-shaded lamp—it was the other fellow, the smart fellow he had seen in the Lounge, and in the Yellow Pavilion, dancing with Flämmchen. He stood there in another man's bedroom with a smile—a green grimace.

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Then he saw Gaigern's open eyes, and saw, too, that he was no longer breathing.

"What's happened then?" he whispered. "What has happened? What has happened? What has happened?" He whispered it over innumerable times to himself, senselessly, without knowing what he said. He stayed there cowering on his knees beside the prostrate man and whispered, "What has happened? What has happened?" Gaigern listened with a polite smile on his lifeless face. He was already dead. He had already left that big hotel and vanished beyond recall. But his hands were still warm as he lay with open eyes on the floor of Room No 71. The green light from the writing-table lamp fell on his beautiful features, which still kept their look of astonishment.

Thus it was that Flämmchen found the two of them when she stole through the forbidden door to see where Preysing had got to. She came with bare feet and stood in the doorway

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along its length of carpet crying help, help, help—and no one would hear. . . .

Kringelein, certainly, who could not sleep because he was on the alert for the threat of renewed pains in his stomach; Kringelein, whom suffering and the approach of death had made thin-skulled and acute of ear; Kringelein heard the low wail as Flämmchen ran by half unconscious outside his door. He did not turn a deaf ear, like the American film agent next door in Room No 68. He got quickly out of bed and opened his door.

The next moment the miracle entered his life to fill and complete it. . . .

The next moment, in fact, Kringelein saw to his astonishment Flämmchen's naked, perfect form. It staggered towards him, fell heavily into his outstretched arms and lay there.

Kringelein did not lose his head, nor did his strength fail him under the burden. She had fainted and although the helpless collapse of the warm and golden brown body in his arms filled him with a sweet enchanting terror, he did a number of perfectly sensible things. He put one arm under the limp neck, the other under her knees, and lifting her up with an effort, he laid her on his bed. Then he shut both doors on to the corridor and drew a deep breath, for the rush of blood from his heart was overpowering. And now something fell to the floor from Flämmchen's drooping hand. It was a blue and somewhat worn shoe with a high heel, which till now she had held pressed to her naked breast. She had snatched it up and taken it with her. She had rescued it as though from a fire or a collapsing house as the only article of clothing that a catastrophe had left her. Kringelein took hold of her hand and laid it carefully by her side. He looked round the room and found the bottle of Hundt's Elixir, and put a few drops to Flämmchen's lips. A quiver passed over her forehead, but she was too unconscious to drink. But she was breathing deeply and at every breath the tangle of her bright hair rose and sank again on the pillow with an indescribable softness. Kringelein ran into the bathroom and soaked a handkerchief in cold water. He sprinkled it with eau-de-Cologne (for since yesterday Kringelein was possessed of such refinements) and returned to

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"How did I get here?" asked Flämmchen. "What are you doing here, dearest?" She said 'dearest' and this gave him a shock of sweet surprise, but as he was already in the midst of wonders he took it as a matter of course.

"You fainted and came to me," he said simply.

Now Flämmchen recognized her mistake. Everything came back to her and she sat straight up in bed.

"Forgive me," she whispered. "But something so awful has happened."

She pulled the bedclothes up to her face and screwed them into her eyes and began to cry. At once Kringelein's eyes filled with tears too, and his lips, which still smiled, began to tremble.

"It is so frightful," Flämmchen whispered, "so frightful, frightful."

Her tears came in a flood that soothed and appeased her. She dabbed the sheet against her face and covered the edge of it with small red heart-shaped transfers of her painted mouth. Kringelein looked on, and the corners of his eyes smarted with the pain of his suppressed emotion. At last he put his hand on Flämmchen's neck. "There, there, there," he said, "there—there—there."

Flämmchen looked up at him with swimming eyes.

"Oh, it's you," she murmured with relief. Now at last she recognized in the spruce figure at the bedside the little man who had danced so timidly with her yesterday and who had been so courageous that day in his interview with Preysing. A confiding and pleased sense of security took hold of her now she found herself in his bed with his hand gently patting her neck.

"But we know each other," she said, and snuggled up to his fingers with the spontaneous gratitude of an animal. Kringelein ceased to pat her and collected his strength—an unexpectedly large resource of strength and aggressiveness.

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"Preysing was with me in my bedroom and the door was open. Suddenly he said he heard something and went out of the room. I may perhaps have dozed off for a moment. I was very sleepy. And then I heard voices, but not very loud and then a fall, and then Preysing didn't come back. And then I was frightened and went through, for the door was open, you know—and there he lay—with his eyes open." Flämmchen once more put the sheet to her blanched face and broke into a storm of weeping over the dead Gaigern. She felt, beyond her power of expression, that something of wonderful beauty had passed out of her ken, something she had missed and that could never now be recalled. "Yesterday I was dancing with him, and he was so nice, and now he has gone and will never come back," she sobbed into the warm darkness of the down quilt.

Kringelein left the window and the sight of the detested Fredersdorf as he saw it through the curtains. He sat down on the edge of the bed. He even put his arm round Flämmchen's shoulders and it seemed to him perfectly natural to be comforting and protecting the weeping girl. He, too, felt the sorrow of Gaigern's death, though he was silent and constrained and could not quite grasp yet that his friend of yesterday was dead.

Flämmchen, when her tears were over, returned to the unclouded sanity of her ordinary self.

"Perhaps," she said softly, "he was really a burglar. But it was not right to kill him for that."

Kringelein recalled the obscure affair over his own pocketbook the night before. He was in need of money, he reflected. Perhaps he had been in anxious search of money all day. He laughed and played the fine gentleman, but perhaps he was only a poor devil after all. Perhaps he had done something desperate. And then a fellow like Preysing had killed him. "No," he said loudly.

"You were quite right in what you said to Preysing early this morning," Flämmchen began, leaning against Kringelein's arm. She felt that he was an old friend and it came quite naturally to her. "I didn't like Preysing either," she added

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y, even if it was with the biggest blackguard on earth—
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"I know that. I can imagine that. I understand that very
well," said Kringelein. "At home everything is always filthy.
Even the very air goes wrong when you haven't got money.
You can't open the window because the warm air has cost
money. You can't have a bath because hot water means coals.
Your razor blades are old and scrape your chin. You have to
save over the washing—no tablecloth, no serviette. You have
to be careful with the soap. Your hairbrush has lost all its
bristles, the coffee pot is broken and cemented together, the
spoons are black. The pillows are hard lumps of old, coarse
feathers. What's broken, stays broken. Nothing is mended.
Your life policy must be paid. And you can't see that you
life's all wrong. You imagine it has got to be like that."

He was resting his head on Flämmchen's, and thus the
went through the litany of the poor together, rocking to an
fro in time to the monotonous chant. They were both tired o
and over-excited and half asleep.

"Your hand-mirror is broken," Flämmchen went on, "a
you can't afford a new one. You have to sleep on the s
behind a screen. There's a perpetual smell of gas. The lod
makes his daily row. The very food you eat and can't pay
because you are out of a job is cast in your teeth. But
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complaining person. I'm good-natured and can put up with a lot. But often it's enough to make you run away—just to get away, even if it was with the biggest blackguard on earth—only to get away. For money—naturally for money. Money's so important, and whoever says otherwise is talking bunkum. Preysing was going to give me a thousand marks. That's a lot of money. Enough to give one a start in life. But that's over and done with. And now I'm where I was again. And at home it's frightful——"

"I know that. I can imagine that. I understand that very well," said Kringelein. "At home everything is always filthy. Even the very air goes wrong when you haven't got money. You can't open the window because the warm air has cost money. You can't have a bath because hot water means coals. Your razor blades are old and scrape your chin. You have to save over the washing—no tablecloth, no serviette. You have to be careful with the soap. Your hairbrush has lost all its bristles, the coffee pot is broken and cemented together, the spoons are black. The pillows are hard lumps of old, coarse feathers. What's broken, stays broken. Nothing is mended. Your life policy must be paid. And you can't see that your life's all wrong. You imagine it has got to be like that."

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It was not to be expected, however, that Flämmchen would immediately fall in love with Kringelein. No, Life is very far from producing such delightful surprises. But in this hotel Room No 70 a sense of intimacy and security came over her and it seemed to her more reliable than the usual day-to-day experiences of her insect existence. Kringelein talked on and on. He opened his heart and told her the whole story of his life, and it seemed to him at this moment that all his life had been directing itself to one aim and one completion—this wonder that had befallen him, this perfection of beauty that lay in his bed, the girl who had come to him, who had left Preysing and come to him——

Flämmchen had no exaggerated opinion of herself. She knew her price. Twenty marks for a photograph in the nude. A hundred and forty marks for a month's office work. Twopence per page for typing with carbon copy. A fur coat at two hundred and forty marks for a week as somebody's mistress. She had no reason, then, to set a high value on herself. But, as Kringelein went on talking, she discovered herself for the first time. She saw herself as though in a mirror. She saw the splendour of her golden skin and her pale gold hair. She saw her limbs, each one radiant with beauty. She was conscious of her freshness, of her untroubled existence always striving on into the future. She discovered herself, like a hidden treasure.

"But after all I'm nothing out of the way," she murmured in a glow of modesty. In the midst of Kringelein's torrent of rapture she started and shuddered when Preysing's name came up. In the last half hour they had both forgotten what had occurred in the green-lit Room No 71. Now of a sudden the whole horror came back.

"I am not going in there again," Flämmchen whispered. "They will have arrested him by now. They'd arrest me too. I am going to stay here in hiding."

Kringelein smiled nervously.

"Why should they arrest you?" he asked, but all the same he was afraid. He, too, had Gaigern clearly before his eyes, in the car, in the aeroplane, at the gambling table, in the white light of the boxing ring. He saw Gaigern as he bent over him,

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Gaigern lay on the carpet in Room No 71. He was dead. othing more could happen to him. No one now could harass pursue him. He would never now find himself in prison. nd that was good. He would never now keep his appointment Vienna with Grusinskaya. And that was sad. But he had ved his life to the full in all his outlawed beauty and strength. Ie had spent his childhood among the fields, his boyhood on orseback. He had been a soldier in the war. He had been ighter, hunter, gambler. He had been a lover and he had been loved. Now he was dead. His hair was moist and matted. There was an ink-stain on his dark blue pyjamas and an astonished smile on his lips. There were the thick woollen socks of a burglar drawn over his feet, and on his cold right hand the cut from his last adventure would never heal again. . . .

Preysing, too, heard the dance music, and it caused him inexpressible torture. Every thought that came into his head took on the syncopated rhythm which the Eastman Band in the Yellow Pavilion sent throbbing through the walls of the hotel. Nothing could have gone worse with the thoughts that were being thought up here all night long, than the music that all night long was being played down there.

It's all up with me, thought Preysing. Done. Finished.

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his knees, and in the full light looked all over the floor. Nothing. The revolver the man had threatened him with was nowhere to be seen—or else had never existed. Preysing stole back to his seat. He felt that he was going crazy. The solid basis of his conventional life had given way beneath his feet ever since the moment when he had flung the fatal telegram on the table at the conference, and since then he had been hurtling downwards from one adventure into another. He felt, as it were, the rush of air in his ears, as he fell from his well-regulated life down into bottomless darkness. He had known men such as he now was, men who had left the rails, who had done great things in the past and now in worn suits begged from one office to another for a job. He saw himself turned adrift to go the same round as they, unkempt, alone and in bad repute. His excessive blood-pressure gave him throbbing pains in the back of his head and made his ears ring. Preysing was so crushed that for minutes together he longed to die of a stroke, and expiate his sin. But nothing of the sort occurred. Gaigern remained dead, and he remained alive.

"My God," he groaned. "My God! Mulle, Babs, Popsy. Oh, God."

He would have liked to bury his face in his hands, but he did not dare. He dreaded the darkness in the hollow of his hands.

Thus Kringelein found him when shortly after two o'clock (the music had just stopped) he entered the room after a cautious knock on the door. Kringelein's lips that night were dead white, but there was a fevered patch of red in his cheeks. He was in a strange state of elation, dignified and aloof, and he was very conscious of his appearance in his smart, well-cut black coat, and also of his *savoir faire* in his conduct of the situation.

"I came on the lady's behalf," he said. "I gather that something has happened here. I shall be glad to do anything I can for you, Herr Generaldirektor."

It was not till he had finished speaking that he looked down at the dead Gaigern. The sight did not shock him. He was merely surprised. For on the way from Room No 70, the idea

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"You cannot leave Berlin," Preysing said from his seat c the dirty-clothes basket. "Your presence will be required. require you. There can be no question of your going away." sounded exactly like a harsh refusal of leave. Kringelein coul have smiled, but that it would have hurt him to do so whi Gaigern lay outstretched and dead on the carpet with his hea on the hard boards. "You will be required as a witness. Yo must be here when the police arrive," the General Direct announced.

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would it not be possible to leave it like that? I mean—listen to me, Kringelein, as one man to another. I can face what has happened here. It was in self-defence—self-defence pure and simple. It's bad enough, but I can face it all the same. But the other business will finish me. It is utter ruin. Can't we—must the police know of this affair with Fräulein Flamm? It would be perfectly simple. I only need to lock the door into No 72 again. Fräulein Flamm spent the night with you. She knows nothing about it at all. Nor you either, Herr Kringelein. Then it is all in order. Everything will be all right. You won't need to give evidence and Fräulein Flamm will not be called. Now, Herr Kringelein, you can understand me. You know my wife. You have known her almost as long as I have. And the old man, you know our old man. After all, you are one of us. There's no need to waste words. My whole life hangs by a thread. I say it frankly. An idiotic affair like this over a woman is nothing. Nothing at all. But it can mean ruin. Herr Kringelein, I love my wife. My life depends on her and the children," he said, as though he were imploring Mulle herself. "You know the two girls, Herr Kringelein. If this business of Fräulein Flamm comes out at the trial I shall lose everything. I shall have nothing left. I'm—I give you my word of honour that nothing, nothing whatever passed between us," he whispered. It was only he remembered it. "Help me, Kringelein. You're a man as I am. Take this affair on yourself. Pack up and go away with the girl and say nothing. Leave all the rest to me. You've nothing to do but hold your tongue, and get Fräulein Flamm to do the same. Nothing else whatever. You can go tomorrow, go right away where you like. I'll give you—listen to me, Herr Kringelein. We had words together earlier on today. There's nothing in that. You do me injustice, believe me, you do. There are always misunderstandings between the management and the staff, and there is no need to take it too seriously. We stand and fall together after all. We're all in the same boat, my dear Kringelein. I'll—I'll give you—you shall have a cheque and go where you like. Now go into No 72 and shut that door. Fräulein Flamm will hold her tongue and all will be well yet. If anybody asks her anything, she spent the

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concealment or constraint, and without a trace of gratitude, in an easy and perfunctory way. "Thank you," he said. "Many thanks for your kind intentions. There will be no occasion for them."

He leaned Preysing against the wall and there he left him—with his broad and sagging shoulders propped against the sprawling pattern of the wallpaper of Room No 71, looking like a man who had fallen into a crevasse. In the passage every second light was turned out. At the corner, however, 'Mind the Step' still shone out in illuminated letters. The grandfather clock struck three with its old-fashioned chime.

At half past three the night porter was rung up while he was nodding over the morning papers. "Hallo," he called down the black mouthpiece. "Hallo, hallo." At first not a sound issued from the telephone. Then somebody cleared his throat, and finally a voice said: "Send the manager to me at once. Preysing. No 71. And notify the police. Something has occurred. . . ."

The events that happen to people in a big hotel do not constitute entire human destinies, complete and rounded off. They are fragments merely, scraps, pieces. The people behind its doors may signify much or little. They may be rising or falling in the scale of life. Prosperity and disaster may be parted by no more than the thickness of a wall. The revolving door twirls around, and what passes between arrival and departure is nothing complete in itself. Perhaps there is no such thing as a completed destiny in the world, but only approximations, beginnings that come to no conclusion or conclusions that have no beginnings. Much that looks like Chance is really Fate. And much that goes on behind Life's doors is not fixed like the pillars of a building nor pre-conceived like the structure of a symphony, nor calculable like the orbit of a star. It is human, fleeting and more difficult to trace than cloud shadows that pass over a meadow. And anyone who attempts an account of what he sees behind those doors runs the risk of balancing himself precariously on a tightrope between falsehood and truth. . . .

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And then, just next door in Room No 70, there is that moment, between four and five in the morning, when the drawn curtains were becoming grey and Flämmchen for the first time took Kringelein in her arms. It was that first sweet moment of tenderness when she did not sell but freely gave. Then for the first time she learnt that it was not a mere pleasure, a meaningless gratification, that she had to give away, but something great—an ecstasy, a happiness, a complete fulfilment. She lay there like a very young mother and held the man in her arms like a child that might drink its fill. Her fingers rested in the hollow, between the sinews at the back of his neck, which illness and weakness had made. Everything is good now, thought Kringelein, no more pain. I am strong. Tired too, but I shall sleep. I have scarcely slept since I came here. It is a pity time is so short. I don't want to go off. I want to stay here. I don't want to have to stop now when everything is just beginning.

"Flämmchen," he whispered to her warm young body, "Flämmchen, don't let me die, please don't let me die."

Flämmchen at once held him closer, and began to comfort him.

"Die—what nonsense! I won't hear of it. It's not so bad as that by a long way. I'll soon look after you. I know a man in Wilmersdorfer Strasse who can work miracles. He has cured people who were far worse than you. He'll soon fix you up. We'll go to him first thing tomorrow. He'll give you a treatment of some kind, and then, you'll be all right again, you'll see. Then we'll set off at once for London, Paris, the South of France. It will be warm there. We'll lie in the sun all day and get sunburnt and be happy. And now you must go to sleep."

She let her unthinking health and strength stream into his exhausted being, and he believed her. He fell asleep blissfully in a blaze of gold that looked like Flämmchen's breast and was also a hill of broom in flower.

And then, two floors higher, there is Doctor Otternschlag dreaming the dream that comes to him every week. He is going

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She let her unthinking health and strength stream into his exhausted being, and he believed her. He fell asleep blissfully in a blaze of gold that looked like Flämmchen's breast and was also a hill of broom in flower.

And then, two floors higher, there is Doctor Otternschlag dreaming the dream that comes to him every week. He is going

A little later, when the first street-sweepers were at work on ıe streets, appeared four gentlemen in overcoats, who bore ıe corporate and unpleasant name of the 'Murder Commis- on'. Rohna himself took them up in the lift to the second oor. The mills of justice were beginning to grind. The hotel ıanagement begged the police to use discretion in order to void a scandal, to hush things up, if possible. . . . .

But it was not possible. Soon even Fredersdorf will know /hat has happened. Soon Frau Generaldirektor Preysing will rrive in Berlin with her apoplectic father, in order to part or ever with her husband in a succession of frightful scenes. 'hat he had killed a man she could get over, in spite of her orror. But the disgusting affair with that woman—and this 'reysing, stammering and perspiring and to his own undoing, ad to confess at the second inquiry by the magistrate—*that* vas utterly incomprehensible to her, and utterly unpardonable.

As for the dead man, Freiherr Felix Benvenuto Amadei von Gaigern, opinions were divided about him, although friendly nough. Not a single person in the Grand Hotel had anything o say against him. There was no previous conviction against ıim. He lay under no suspicion. He was not known to the olice. He had a few debts, and how he had come by his small ar (pledged, in any case, as security for a loan) could not be scertained. But that proved nothing against him. He was a gambler, fond of women, often drunk, but always a good fel- ow. Some of the hotel staff wept over the whispered news of ıis death. The pageboy, Karl Nispe, with the gold cigarette ase in his pocket, wept. This boy was one of the first witnesses o be called and he was able to declare that the Baron was not n his room shortly before twelve o'clock. A lady on the first loor, in Room No 18, the room below No 71, heard the ıoise of a fall at about the same time. She noticed the time particularly, because the racket above annoyed her. But what ıad occurred between twelve and half past three, and why had ıot Herr Preysing notified the police at once? The story was arried on at this point by the clear, if reserved, answers of the vitnesses Flamm and Kringelein—those very answers which vere read in the midday papers and gave the final blow to

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his blue overcoat and his wash-leather gloves, with his alert glance and the perfume of lavender and Turkish cigarettes. Kringelein, however, when he and Flämmchen had given their evidence, and they were free to depart, passed out of the hotel like a king. Every back was bent and every hand extended for a tip. In all probability his glory will not last long. Probably within a week or two his next attack of acute pain will end it.

But there is just a chance that this courageous 'moribundus' may develop fresh resources and remain alive in defiance of every diagnosis. That in any case is Flämmchen's belief. And Kringelein, borne aloft in ecstasy, wishes to believe it too. And, after all, it is not so very important how long Kringelein has to live. For, long or short, Life is what you put into it. Two full days may be longer than forty empty years. That was the wisdom Kringelein took away with him, when he stepped out of the Grand Hotel at Flämmchen's side and got into the taxi that took them to the station.

It was then ten o'clock in the morning. The hotel wore its customary aspect. The charwoman swept out the Lounge with damp sawdust while Rohna looked on in silent disapprobation. The fountain played. In the breakfast room men with despatch cases sat smoking black cigars and talking business. The staff whispered together in the passages, but so far nothing had reached the ears of the visitors. Room No 71 was locked by order of the police and both windows remained wide open for the whole of the chill March day. Next door in Room No 72 the beds were made up afresh and a moist cloth passed behind the wardrobe. At eight o'clock the Hall Porter, Senf, came on duty. His face was puffy, for he had spent the whole night sitting in the cold hospital corridor waiting to hear whether his wife would survive till morning. He scarcely heard all that little Georgi had to tell him, and he swayed unsteadily as he sorted the morning's post.

"My head's going round proper," he said in extenuation. "You'd never believe what a difference the lack of a little sleep makes. And you say Pilzheim spotted that chauffeur. Pilzheim's a smart fellow, and I've always said so. If we had put him on the track of that Baron, all this would never have arisen

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"No, Herr Kringelein has left," Georgi answered.

"Left. I see. Did he leave nothing for me?" he asked, afte a pause.

"No. Nothing, I am afraid," Georgi replied with a polite ness copied from the Hall Porter.

Otternschlag turned about, and went back to his seat, thi time in a bee-line straight across the Lounge—a most remark able event in his case. The Hall Porter ran past him. His blon and trustworthy old-soldier's face was wet with perspiration a though after some gigantic exertion. He came to a stop behin his table, as though he had reached a haven.

"It is a little girl. There had to be an operation. But ther she is and weighs five pounds. No danger at all now. None a all. Both of them alive and kicking," he panted, and took hi cap off—thereby revealing the radiantly happy face of a purel private person, but he put it on again immediately as Rohn looked over his glass screen. The married couple from th provinces got into the lift, and were taken up to Room No 72 the room with two beds and without a bath. The scent o Flämmchen's violet powder still lingered there.

"Open the window," said the wife.

"Yes, and let in a fine draught," said the husband.

In the Lounge, Doctor Otternschlag sat and talked to him self. "It's dismal," he said. "Always the same. Nothing hap pens. One's always alone, dismally, alone. The earth is a extinct planet—no warmth left in it. At Rouge Croix ninety two men were buried in a fall of earth and never seen again Perhaps I'm one of them and sit there with the rest ever sinc the end of the war and am dead and don't know it. If onl something worth while would happen in this great big pub But no, not a thing. 'Left.' Adieu, Herr Kringelein. I coul have given you a prescription against those pains of yours. Bu no, gone without a word. And so it goes on. In—out, in—ou in—out——"

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